

Foreign minister in Egypt for talks

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh arrived in Egypt Friday for talks with his Egyptian counterpart Amr Musa on bilateral relations and ways of giving impetus to the Middle East peace process. In a statement at Cairo airport, Dr. Tarawneh said he was there to relay a message from His Majesty King Hussein to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Dr. Tarawneh stressed that Jordan supports the Palestinians in their negotiations with Israel and their rights to self-determination on their national soil. In reply to a question on King Hussein's meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Aqaba, Dr. Tarawneh said: "The meeting resulted in bringing together our views on this issue and were profoundly dealt with but the technical aspects still need more work," Dr. Tarawneh said.

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Ross meets Israeli minister while hopes dim for fast breakthrough

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel and the Palestinians saw little hope for a breakthrough Friday as U.S. envoy Dennis Ross met with top Israeli officials on Friday in a bid to find a formula to revive peace negotiations.

Mr. Ross had talks in the morning with Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai apparently looking for Israeli gestures to convince the Palestinians to drop their demands that construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem be halted.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has made this a condition for returning to negotiations, which have been frozen for the last two months.

The envoy was to meet with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat around midnight (21:00 GMT) Friday in the West Bank city of Ramallah for the second time since he launched his mission on Wednesday.

During the day he was also due to head to Cairo for talks on the peace process with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, according to Israeli and Egyptian officials. But with Israel and the Palestinians sticking to their positions over the issue of settlement building, both sides doubted Mr. Ross would hit on a formula to allow the resumption of talks.

"The truth is that both sides have really lowered expectations and there really are no new developments," said the senior Israeli official, who asked not to be named.

Mr. Ross himself acknowledged that there was "no magic formula" that was going to break the impasse during a meeting late Thursday with his European Union (EU) counterpart, the Spanish diplomat Miguel Moratinos, European sources told AFP.

Negotiations have come to a halt over the issue of a new Jewish settlement which Israel began building in Arab east Jerusalem in mid-March on Jabal Abu Ghneim.



An Israeli soldier aims his rifle at Palestinian stone-throwers in Hebron on Friday. Three Palestinians were shot and wounded in the clashes which broke out when hundreds of Palestinian youth hurled stones at Israeli soldiers (Reuters photo)

Palestinians, Israeli army clash in Hebron

HEBRON (Agencies) — Dozens of Palestinians threw stones Friday at Israeli troops guarding the Jewish enclave in Hebron and the soldiers retaliated by firing rubber bullets, witnesses said.

Three Palestinians were reported injured in the clashes, which erupted as U.S. Mideast envoy Dennis Ross pursued a new mediating mission between Israelis and Palestinians in a bid to break a two-month freeze in peace negotiations.

Hebron had been the scene of some of the most violent clashes between Palestinians and soldiers after the peace process broke down when Israel began construction in March of a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

But the city had been relatively quiet in recent days although Hebron's settlers

have complained of a series of minor stone and bottle-throwing incidents.

Friday's unrest erupted as Palestinians were gathering for weekly Muslim prayers at the Ibrahim Mosque, a holy site for both Muslims and Jews also known as the Cave of the Patriarchs.

Under the Oslo peace accord, Israel maintains control of a fifth of Hebron where some 400 Jewish settlers live and which includes the Cave of the Patriarchs.

The rest of the city of 120,000 has been under the control of Palestinian National Authority (PNA) since mid-January. In another incident, shots were fired overnight at an Israeli van travelling on a settler bypass road north of Hebron. No one was injured and an army search failed to find the attackers, officials said.

King, Netanyahu meet in Aqaba; Israel agrees on water plan according to treaty

By Tareq Ayyoub
 Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Israel agreed Thursday to provide Jordan with an extra 50 million cubic metres (mcm) of drinking water in accordance with the peace treaty signed between the two countries in 1994. Minister of Water Munthir Haddadin said Friday.

Dr. Haddadin said the agreement by which part of the 50 mcm will be supplied immediately and the remainder in 3 years, was reactivated during talks that His Majesty King Hussein held Thursday evening with

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Aqaba.

According to Dr. Haddadin the 50 mcm is in addition to the 43 mcm of water that Jordan gets from the waters of the Yarmouk River.

Studies are currently underway to build dams in the Jordan Valley in order to collect the flood water from the Yarmouk River.

The two sides agreed to hold further extensive talks at the level of experts in Amman and Tel Aviv in the coming week to discuss the means of implementing the agreement, the sources said.

Israel Radio said Friday that the meeting was attended by Israel's national infrastructure minister, Ariel Sharon, who is in charge of the water file and high-ranking Israeli security officials.

Mr. Netanyahu told his cabinet in a meeting on Friday that he discussed with King Hussein "the proper ways to find a long run solution to water sharing between the two countries," the radio added.

Reuters reported that Mr. Sharon was quoted in Israel's largest newspapers Yediot Ahronot as saying: "I believe we also found

solutions, and I want to emphasise there was no concession on Israel's part." The radio also said that the meeting discussed "the possibility of giving up Israel's reservations regarding the water issue in order to resolve the two-sides water differences."

Jordanian officials have frequently complained that Israel was dragging its feet regarding the implementation of accords of the provision of the peace treaty pertaining to water at a time when the Kingdom was

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Palestinian killed for selling land to Jews after PNA imposes death penalty

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A Palestinian who sold land to Israelis was found slain on Friday less than a week after the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) imposed a death sentence on such deals, security sources said.

Palestinian security sources told AFP Farid Bashiti's body was found by a security patrol with his hands tied behind his back and markings of a blow to

the head before dawn in the West Bank self-rule city of Ramallah.

The body was then handed over to his family in Arab east Jerusalem, they said without specifying if there were suspects in the murder.

Neighbours of Bashiti, who owned a real estate office in Arab east Jerusalem, said he was

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Settlers purchase land to expand in east Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Jewish settlers have discreetly expanded a religious seminary on the Mount of Olives in occupied Arab east Jerusalem with the help of a Miami-based benefactor, Israel Radio reported Thursday.

The Beit Orot Yeshiva bought a neighbouring house and plot of land from a defrocked bishop of the Armenian Orthodox Church through a company controlled by Erwin Muskhovich, a wealthy American Jew who has financed the purchase of many homes and plots of land from Arabs in east Jerusalem, the radio said.

An advisor to Palestinian National Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat, Ahmad Tibi, quickly condemned the expansion of the seminary as a "very dangerous provocation which threatens to spark new violence."

Mr. Tibi told Israel Radio the secret purchase of the Mount of Olives property was "another step in the Judaisation of Arab east Jerusalem," which Israel occupied in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and annexed as part of its capital. "Those

who are behind this criminal act will carry a heavy responsibility," he added.

Armenian Orthodox Archbishop Torkom Manougian told AFP a former Bishop Shahe Ajemian, who had been thrown out of the church 15 years ago because of "internal disputes," had sold the land to the Yeshiva. "The land was his and did not belong to the monastery. We do not sell land and this had nothing to do with us. He was rejected by us and now lives abroad in Armenia or France," Archbishop Manougian said.

The PNA announced earlier this week that Palestinians who sell property in Arab east Jerusalem, the West Bank or Gaza Strip to settlers risked being condemned to death.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been frozen since Israel began building in March a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, which Palestinians hope to make the capital of a future state.

Palestinians claim Jewish settlement expansion is aimed at prejudicing scheduled negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories.

Libya's Qadhafi flies to Niger despite U.N. ban

NIAMEY (Agencies) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi flew to the impoverished west African country of Niger on Thursday in apparent defiance of a U.N. ban on flights from the Pariah state.

The United States said on Thursday it would enforce sanctions against Libya, but State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns did not specify how Washington might carry out this threat. One official told Reuters there was no consideration of military action.

"We are investigating these reports to confirm the facts," Mr. Burns said. "If they are accurate it would be a serious violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 748, which prohibits Libyan aircraft from engaging in international flights. We will pursue this matter in the U.N. Security Council and in the Sanctions Committee."

"The issue here is Pan Am 103. We haven't forgotten the... people who were killed on that plane on Dec. 21, 1988. That's why the sanctions are in place against Libya. We have an obligation to the victims' families to enforce these sanctions," he told reporters. The control tower at Niamey's Diori

Hamani International Airport declined to comment on whether the U.N. ban, slapped on Libya in 1992 over the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, had been broken. Colonel Qadhafi, with a large entourage, arrived with four Boeing 727 jets of Libyan Airlines and was met by Niger's president.

"I came to bring support and sympathy to President Ibrahim Bare Maïnassara, to the government and Nigerian people," Col. Qadhafi told reporters before going into a meeting with Mr. Maïnassara.

Col. Qadhafi's last trip abroad was by land to Tunisia in October 1996. He violated the ban when a Libyan-registered plane flew him to Cairo and back to attend an Arab summit in June 1996.

The Libyan news agency JANA on Wednesday said Col. Qadhafi would lead prayers in Niger and neighbouring Nigeria during a visit to western Africa as leader of the Islamic Popular Leadership, an organisation he created in 1989.

Col. Qadhafi said when the grouping was established that he wanted it to become equivalent to the International Council of Churches or World Jewish Congress to help poor Muslims throughout the world.

Moratinos speaks candidly on EU's plans for the region

By Ramzi E. Khoury
 Jordan Times Staff Reporter

Amman (J.T.) — In an interview with the European Union (EU) special envoy to the Middle East, Miguel Moratinos, he told the Jordan Times that his stop in Amman was very successful due to the fact that Jordan and the EU "share the same concerns, objectives and analysis."

Ambassador Moratinos was recently appointed to allow the EU a more practical role as facilitator between the Arab states and Israel. When asked if there was room for the EU to play an "official" role in the peace process, Mr. Moratinos said: "We don't want to change the rules of Madrid and the Madrid framework at this stage. That will create another obstacle and we are here to overcome difficulties and not to create them."

Before he assumed his new position, Mr. Moratinos was Spain's ambassador to Israel for six months, held many political positions, some of which where in the Middle East and is considered one of the most prominent European authorities on Middle

Eastern politics. His current shuttle trip to the Middle East came in a bid by the EU to restart the stalled negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis as well as to jumpstart the peace process on the other tracks.

Mr. Moratinos spoke candidly on the EU's position concerning the peace process, economic cooperation and the future of the region.

"The goal... is to have a free zone in the whole region of the Mediterranean by the year 2000 so that its peoples would have created a kind of interdependence between them," He added "They have to modernise and adapt their economies to the new challenge of economic globalisation."

Mr. Moratinos criticised some Arab slogans which he believes do not benefit the people of the region and suggested that "it's high time that the Arab intelligentsia starts to think with a different pattern of thought for the future."

For the full text of the interview see the front page of the "Europe Day" supplement.

U.N. committee assails Israeli interrogations

GENEVA (Agencies) — Israel vigorously defended its interrogation practices before a U.N. human rights committee Wednesday, arguing that the country's questioning methods had helped prevent about 90 terrorist attacks in the past two years.

Nili Arad, director general of Israel's Ministry of Justice, justified what she called Israel's "exceptional interrogation methods" before independent experts of the U.N. Committee Against Torture, who questioned whether such practices amounted to torture.

Israel is one of the countries under periodic review before the panel, which meets twice a year in Geneva to discuss adherence by nations that have signed the convention against torture. Members brushed aside

results of an Israeli investigation that acquitted of criminal wrongdoing those who questioned 29-year-old Palestinian prisoner Abdul Samad Harizat in 1995. Mr. Harizat died in custody.

Bent Sorensen of Denmark, a member of the committee, said that evidence from the autopsy on Mr. Harizat supported the conclusion that he died of violent shaking during investigation by Israeli security officials.

More than 20 Palestinians, most recently Mr. Harizat, have died in Israeli prisons since 1987.

In November, Israel's Supreme Court lifted an injunction against the use of force in the interrogation of Palestinian detainees in

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U.S. attorney general confirms Israeli spying probe; FBI investigating

WASHINGTON (R) — Attorney General Janet Reno confirmed on Thursday an investigation was underway involving an intercepted conversation suggesting Israel may have an intelligence source who can obtain sensitive U.S. information.

"We have an ongoing investigation, so I can't comment," Ms. Reno said at her weekly Justice Department news briefing. She was responding to a question on whether there was any concern regarding the investigation into possible Israeli penetration of the U.S. government.

Ms. Reno also was asked if she was concerned that transcripts of the conversation from the super-secret U.S. National Security Agency had been printed by the news media and whether there was a leak investigation into the disclosure.

Justice Department officials later said Ms. Reno's reference to an ongoing investigation involved the possible Israeli security

breach, not a leak investigation into the disclosure of the probe by the Washington Post on Wednesday.

Ms. Reno and the officials declined to give any details of the investigation. But the Post reported on Friday that Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents began conducting surveillance of several high-ranking officials of the State Department and National Security Council staff in recent weeks.

The newspaper quoted unidentified sources as saying that the FBI had not determined whether any of the individuals placed under surveillance had acted improperly.

In Tel Aviv, Israel has flatly denied that the FBI was probing whether a senior U.S. government official had been passing highly sensitive information to the Israeli government.

But the New York Times on Thursday, quoting unnamed U.S. officials, also

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U.N. envoy promises to speed up supplies to Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs Yasushi Akashi promised here on Thursday to speed up implementation of the oil-for-food deal with Iraq.

"In the days to come you will see much more speed in the arrival and distribution of humanitarian goods," Mr. Akashi told reporters as he wound up his six-day mission to Iraq.

"We have overcome many initial difficulties, and we have now a positive momentum," Mr. Akashi said in answer to Iraqi complaints that implementation of the deal, which began in December, has proceeded too slowly.

Iraq called on Thursday for the U.N. to work to end U.S. influence over the oil-for-food deal, which is a slight lifting of the international economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Iraq rejects the policy of the U.S. administration," Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said. "The U.N. is the only one in charge of implementing the oil-for-food accord and not the U.S. representative to the U.N. Sanctions Committee."

Mr. Ramadan made the comment as he received Mr. Akashi, an Iraqi official said. Mr. Akashi said he would

not comment on actions of a U.N. member government, but added he will "make an honest and objective report on what has been accomplished in the first 180 days."

"What I saw in Iraq was clear evidence of prevailing human suffering, which is unmistakable... unfortunately it is one of the consequences of economic sanctions," he said.

"I asked to visit some hospitals without any prior warning, and I saw clear signs of deep suffering," Mr. Akashi added.

The Iraqi vice president said Washington played a "deceitful" role in the committee, which decides which

food and medicine contracts to approve for Iraq, and asked Mr. Akashi to "put an end to U.S. hegemony."

"The U.S. administration has clear political objectives and takes an attitude intended to prolong the embargo imposed on the Iraqi people," the vice president said, urging the U.N. to accelerate the implementation of the accord.

The oil-for-food agreement allows Iraq to sell up to \$2 billion in crude oil every six months so it can buy food and medicine under strict U.N. supervision.

Mr. Akashi has been in Iraq since Saturday to check on the arrangements for U.N.

aid. Economic sanctions against Iraq have remained in place because U.N. weapons inspectors say Baghdad has yet to show that it has destroyed all its means of producing biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

Baghdad has repeatedly complained that approval of the contracts was going too slowly, and accused U.S. representatives on the sanctions committee of causing the delay. The first food shipments arrived March 20, but so far no medicine has arrived. Iraq was driven out of Kuwait in 1991 by an international coalition led by the U.S.

King, Netanyahu meet in Aqaba

(Continued from page 1)

ing growing water shortages.

Dr. Tarawneh reiterated before departure for Cairo that there was no crisis with Israel but that the last week saw only "differences in point of views regarding the enforcement of some clauses in the peace treaty," pertaining to water.

"The treaty stipulates that the two countries share water resources, down stream from the Yarmouk river. Jordan is getting its share from this source," the Minister told Egyptian radio.

"The treaty also called for

a joint effort to find new water sources after one year of ratifying the treaty. The difference with Israel focuses on this clause," Dr. Tarawneh said, adding that "the issue of water is the most important problem that the region will face by the turn of the coming century."

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi told the Jordan Times that during Thursday's meeting the "two sides also discussed the deadlock in the Arab-Israeli peace process especially the three-month stalled talks with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA)."

U.S. attorney general confirms Israeli spying probe

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confirmed the probe.

The Post said the investigation was launched in January after the National Security Agency intercepted a secure communication between a senior Israeli intelligence officer in Washington and a superior in Tel Aviv.

The communication referred to someone codenamed "Mega" and an attempt to obtain a sensitive American document, a letter from then Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, the Post reported. The Post said the content of the conversation led U.S. officials to believe that Mega may be someone in the U.S. government who provided information to Israel in the past.

In Jerusalem, Israeli media and experts Thursday suggested a misunderstanding over the codename "Mega" was to blame.

"I can tell you that I know the facts, know the

truth. When the truth becomes clear, I believe everyone will understand how false and ludicrous the story is," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet secretary Danny Naveh.

Israel's Haaretz newspaper said Mega was apparently a mistaken decoding of "Elga" — an old Israeli intelligence word for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

The last major spy case involving the United States and Israel occurred 12 years ago, Jonathan Pollard, a Jewish U.S. Navy intelligence officer, was arrested for passing secrets to Israel. He is serving a life prison sentence.

The FBI in February said agents seized computers, financial records and other documents from the home of a suburban Detroit tank engineer suspected of having divulged U.S. military secrets to Israel for the past 10 years.

U.N. committee assails Israeli interrogations

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certain cases. Since then, critics have accused Israel of approving torture during investigations.

"The state of Israel categorically deplores and prohibits the practice of torture," Ms. Arad said, adding that under "extreme and exceptional circumstances," investigators used unpleasant methods "which would be normally regarded as unacceptable."

She said Israel was trying to ensure the safety of its citizens against militant terrorist attacks while maintaining basic principles of justice.

Peter Thomas Burns, the U.N. Committee member specialising in Israel, said Israel seemed to think that standards for treatment of detainees could be modified depending on circumstances, while the standards of the convention against torture were absolute.

Mr. Burns questioned how Israel did not define as ill-treatment or torture prolonged interrogation, shaking, sleep deprivation and awkward and painful sitting positions.

He also noted that the convention against torture prohibits "exceptional circumstances" as excuses for torture.

The Israeli human rights

group B'tselem cited as an example of such torture the case of Palestinian Ayman Kafishah, arrested by Israeli security forces on April 5 in connection with the bombing of a Tel Aviv cafe in March that killed three Israeli women.

The group said Mr. Kafishah had been interrogated for 36 consecutive hours, shaken violently and threatened with the torture of his family. He was also denied the right to see his lawyer for a full month, the group charged.

The U.N.'s investigator on Israel, Hannu Hallen of Israel, reported to the U.N. Human Rights Commission earlier this year that serious human rights violations continued in the occupied territories last year.

The head of Israel's government press office, Moshe Fogel, said then that the report was biased and failed to take into account "the fact that Israel lives in constant and real threat of terrorism." Mr. Fogel said Israel had a responsibility to protect the lives of both Jews and Arabs at the hands of terrorists.

And on Friday The U.N. Committee against Torture called on Israel to "cease immediately" using methods including violent shaking and sleep deprivation in interrogating Palestinian detainees, saying they con-

stituted torture.

But Israel's Ambassador Yosef Landan firmly rejected the committee's final conclusions and recommendations, which were read out by committee expert Peter Burns, a Canadian professor. The Committee against Torture, composed of 10 independent experts relying mainly on information from human rights groups, declared that Israel's interrogation methods breached the 1987 convention against torture which it has ratified.

Methods including hooding, sleep deprivation for prolonged periods, violent shaking and even death threats were often used in combination on detainees, it said.

The U.N. committee also expressed concern that the effect of a decision by Israel's Supreme Court last November was to allow such interrogation practices to continue and to "legitimise them for domestic purposes."

But Mr. Landan rejected the charges against the Jewish state, saying: "It is absolutely not the case that Israel uses torture or any methods tantamount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in interrogating suspected terrorists... Israel has nothing to hide on this issue."

Palestinian killed for selling land

(Continued from page 1)

known to have mediated in "many deals for the sale of Palestinian land to Jews" and was a drug dealer.

Earlier this week Palestinian Justice Minister Freih Abu Mideen announced that the PNA would impose the death sentence on Palestinians found guilty of selling land in the West Bank or Arab east Jerusalem to Jews.

Palestinians consider such land sales as treason since the lands are often used to expand Jewish settlements and give Israel legal claim to land

in the areas which they seek as a future state.

The highest Muslim authority in Jerusalem, Mufti Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, said in his weekly sermon at Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem that Palestinians involved in land deals with Jews were "outside Islam."

"Such a person is not a Muslim and according to our religion we shouldn't pray over the body in a mosque. He should not be buried in a Muslim cemetery," he said in the sermon.

Mufti Sabri told AFP that Bashiti's family approached him before prayers to ask him what

to do with the corpse. "They agreed he had dealt with the enemy and could not be buried by Muslim practice," he said.

He said a fatwa had been issued "which forbids selling lands to Jews. Whoever does so is considered outside Islam."

"I didn't mention his name (during my sermon) because I don't want to dirty my mouth and the mosque," Mufti Sabri said.



Shiite Muslim women try to hide their faces from the camera as they walk past a poster of Pope John Paul II in a Beirut airport road on Friday (Reuters photo)

Lebanese detainees in Israeli jails appeal to Pope

BEIRUT (AFP) —

Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails expressed regret on Thursday for not being able to greet Pope John Paul II during his two-day visit to Lebanon this weekend.

"They ardently desire to greet you, but Israel, which occupies our land, detains them and tortures them," said a statement by the Committee for the Support of Lebanese Detainees in Israeli prisons.

"They are condemned... to succumb to the injustice of blind souls who forbid them from seeing you, greeting you or praying with you at the Martyrs' Square," the statement said.

The Pope is scheduled to pay his visit here, his first to the Middle East, Saturday and Sunday, when he will hold a mass at the Martyrs' Square in war-devastated downtown Beirut.

"These are Lebanese who heard that when you visit a country, prison wardens offer you the keys of the jails. Are you going to receive the keys of the concentration camp of Khiam and other Israeli jails?" the statement asked.

More than 120 Lebanese are being held in a prison, run by the Israeli-allyed South Lebanon Army, in the village of Khiam in the Jewish state's "security zone."

Some 52 Lebanese are also imprisoned inside Israel. A number of human rights groups, including the London-based Amnesty International, have denounced cases of torture and ill treatment in prisons where Lebanese are being held without trial.

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Israeli army in need of some \$667 million for upgrade

TEL AVIV (AFP) —

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said in comments published Friday that the army needs as much as \$667 million to bring its forces up-to-date.

The comments came after a state comptroller's report found the army was not sufficiently prepared for war as emergency reserves are low, ammunition and equipment is not maintained and about a third of the population does not possess gas masks.

The Israeli Finance Ministry decided this week that it would make additional cuts in this year's budget that may affect the military. "I don't think that under the present situation there is room to cut anything," Mr. Mordechai told the Maariv newspaper. "We're going to demand a

much larger budget for 1998." Israeli Army Chief-of-Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak told reporters Thursday: "So long as there is no budgetary increase, we will not be able to bring about a dramatic change in our operations."

Israeli military sources have said recently that Israel is closer to war than to peace. The reports come in light of recent tensions in the peace process brought on by right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to begin construction on a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem — a move that brought fierce Arab and international criticism on the Jewish state. The Arab League decided in light of the settlement construction to freeze normalisation with Israel.

Israeli defence officials said last week that Syria had begun fitting VX poison gas to missiles that can reach Israel. The Israeli airforce has asked for an immediate government decision to purchase combat aircraft in addition to 25 F-15 planes to be bought in 1998-1999, the Haaretz newspaper reported Friday.

The commander of the force told the paper Israel was considering buying F-15 planes from the U.S. Macdonald Douglas or F-16 craft from the U.S. Lockheed Martin. The report did not say how many such planes the commander had requested be purchased.

The purchase of the 25 fighter jets is slated to cost \$2.2 billion including know-how and training but the cost of any additional planes would be less.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

15:35 French Programmes
16:00 Gillette World Sport
16:30 Doc — Innovations
16:50 Tilt
17:15 Drama — Blue Heeders
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hangin' With Mr. Cooper
20:00 Doc — Magazine-01
20:30 Time Trax
21:10 News in English
22:25 MacGyver
23:15 Feature film — "My Science Project"

PRAYER TIMES

04:10 Church of Nazareth Tel. 637440
05:30 (Sunrise) Duha
12:32 Dhuhur
16:12 Asr
19:25 Maghreb
20:35 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifheh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 63785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
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German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 545457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 637440
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Under the effect of a wave affecting the Kingdom, hot and dry weather conditions will prevail with winds easterly to southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be hot, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.
Min./Max. temp. Amman 18/33 Aqaba 24/40 Deserts 15/25 Jordan Valley 22/40
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 32 Aqaba 39 Humidity readings: Amman 18 per cent, Aqaba 18 per cent.

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The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

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The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
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Dr. Ayman Al Mohdaseh 875748
Dr. Jamal Jbarah 847251
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 885446
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Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
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Najib pharmacy 847632
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Dr. Hilal Al Sayyid 986702
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417
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Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (direct assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 851615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200
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AMMAN:
Russeini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 642816
Aklieh Maternity, J. Amn 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/15
Army, Marika 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200
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ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09/983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09/900560
Dn Sina Hospital 09/986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital 09/900990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02/272275
Dn Al Nafess Hospital 02/247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03/814111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.
ARRIVALS
DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
07:20 Beirut (RJ)
09:30 Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
12:00 Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
12:05 Vienna (RJ)
12:45 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:45 Paris (RJ)
13:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:20 Amsterdam, Brussels (RJ)
14:00 London (RJ)
17:25 Cairo (RJ)
21:05 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:50 Bombay (RJ)
22:00 Larnaca (RJ)
23:00 Jeddah (RJ)
01:00 Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
02:00 Dubai (RJ)
03:00 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00 Damascus (RJ)
10:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:35 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
10:45 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
11:05 Beirut (RJ)
11:30 Colombo (RJ)
15:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
19:10 London, Berlin (RJ)
20:40 Vienna (RJ)
21:15 Cairo (RJ)
22:00 Paris (add) (RJ)
23:59 Paris (RJ)
00:30 Paris (add) (RJ)
01:15 Larnaca (RJ)
03:15 Jakarta (RJ)
06:00 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights

06:00 Jakarta (GA)
07:05 London, Damascus (BA)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
13:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
19:15 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
20:10 London (GA)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
23:45 Beirut (ME)
01:00 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Cairo (MS)
03:00 Rome (AZ)
04:00 Rome (AZ)
06:50 Larnaca (CY)
07:10 London (GA)
08:10 Damascus, London (BA)
14:00 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
20:15 Dubai (EK)
21:10 Jakarta (GA)
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)
00:25 Amsterdam (KL)
02:00 Cairo (MS)
04:00 Athens (OA)
07:00 Beirut (ME)

Queen Noor meets with president of the Pan-Arab African Ophthalmology Council

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday met with the President of the Pan-Arab African Council of Ophthalmology (PAACO) Dr. Akel Al Maghrabi to discuss the formation of a National Blindness Prevention Committee (NBPC), according to a Royal Court statement.

The committee, to be chaired by HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, will comprise 15 volunteers including ophthalmologists, researchers, rehabilitation

and educational specialists as well as representatives from the Ministry of Health, the Jordan Eye Bank, the International Eye Foundation and Dr. Maghrabi's "Al Noor" Foundation.

The Queen accepted Dr. Maghrabi's request to be the patron of the committee describing it as "a privilege to work together with Prince Ra'd and Al Noor Foundation to strengthen and improve sight restoration and blindness prevention programmes for people

in Jordan, especially the young."

The NBPC will establish a comprehensive registry of the blind including causes of the disease and means of treating it, the statement said.

The Queen commended Dr. Maghrabi's pioneering work and his commitment "to providing quality eye care services affordable and accessible to all economic strata."

Queen Noor and Dr. Maghrabi also discussed plans to "twin" Al Noor

Foundation with the Noor Al Hussein Foundation in order to provide outreach eye care programmes for underprivileged communities in Jordan.

Al Noor Foundation, which is based at Al Maghrabi Eye Hospital in Jeddah and in Cairo, develops sight restoration and blindness prevention programmes in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, the statement maintained.

Attending the meeting with the Queen was Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid.

Bani Hamida, Queen 'cross borders'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The annual Bani Hamida spring exhibition was transformed into an international cultural event, when 12 countries from around the world exhibited their traditional arts and crafts alongside the colourful hand-weavings of the Bani Hamida women, a Royal Court statement said.

The ten-day exhibition, which was Thursday opened by her Majesty Queen Noor at the Jordanian Contractors' Association's building, introduces visitors to the cultural heritage of Australia, Canada, the United States, Japan, Indonesia, South Africa, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Norway, the United Kingdom and Turkey.

The "Crossing Borders" exhibition features European paintings, native American crafts, Japanese dolls, American quilts, Norwegian weavings as well as Turkish ceramics and silverwork, the statement said.

Bani Hamida's spring collection is environmentally-friendly, using natural vegetable dyes, such as henna, sumac and cumin, woven together in unusual colour combinations.

The Bani Hamida Women's Weaving Project was founded in 1985 as part of a national effort initiated by the Queen

to revive and promote Jordan's heritage, increase work opportunities for low-income families and enhance the status of women as wage earners and decision-makers in their communities.

Bani Hamida was transferred from the U.S.-based Save the Children to the care of the Jordan Society for Development (JSD), which was established last year under the chairmanship of Queen Noor.

JSD is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the "financial, cultural, health, social and environmental standard of living of community members through comprehensive development programmes," according to the statement.

The Queen, accompanied by JSD Honorary Vice-Chairperson HRH Princess Ghida Talal, was received by the ambassadors and cultural attachés of the participating countries, JSD Chairman Ja'far Toukan and JSD members. Save the Children Deputy Director Michael Austin, Chairman of the Board of Jordanian Contractors' Association Engineer Wa'el Toukan and General Manager of the Specialised Engineering Industries Company As'ad Za'tar.

Jordan tentatively approves PNA request to operate commercial flights in Amman

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan has "in principle" approved a request by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to operate commercial flights from the Egyptian airport Al Areeh, in the Sinai, to Amman until the Dabaniyah Airport in Gaza Strip is inaugurated, Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Khatib affirmed Friday.

Mr. Khatib confirmed that the Council of Minister's approval was received last week but, he said, no date has been yet fixed for launching the flights.

Jordan has requested that the PNA specify the number of flights it wishes to operate, the date of the first flight's launching and other technical details.

"A Palestinian aviation team, headed by Chief of the Palestine Civil Avi-

ation Authority Brigadier Fayez Zaidan, is expected here this month to discuss flights details with Jordanian aviation officials," Mr. Khatib told the Jordan Times Friday.

Jordan will be the sixth country to grant permission to Palestine Airlines (PA) to operate commercial flights from the Sinai; the other countries are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, he stated.

Mr. Khatib emphasised that the "PA flights from Al Areeh airport will be temporary until Gaza airport is operational."

Head of Jordan Civil Aviation Authority Captain Jassir Zayad was not immediately available for comment.

Last month, two Palestinian Fokker-50 jets made their first landing at Marka airport, transporting over 80 West Bank students to Casablanca to

participate in aviation training, financed by the Moroccan government.

Negotiations between the PNA and Israel over launching a Palestinian airport in Gaza have been deadlocked due to an Israeli requisition to maintain full control of airport security.

The Palestinians have refused the demand, insisting that airport security should be solely a Palestinian responsibility.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's private jet has heretofore been the only aircraft granted landing permission to the Gaza airport by the Israeli government.

PA, which launched its first flight last year to transport Palestinian pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, is comprised of four Dutch-made Fokker-50 planes.

FAO to aid Jordan with construction of sheep, goat cheese processing plants

AMMAN (J.T.) — In response to a Jordanian government request, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) is currently helping Jordan construct four sheep and goat milk cheese processing plants in the Kingdom, FAO regional coordinator Michel Haj confirmed.

He told the Jordan Times that goats and sheep constitute the majority of Jordan's livestock wealth, numbering approximately 2,182,000 heads and accounting for 70.5 per cent of ruminating animals in

the country.

They are also responsible for the production of 148,000 tonnes of dairy products, according to figures compiled in 1995.

Dairy products are produced mainly in the Amman, Zarqa and Mafrqa governorates, but sheep and goat milk is not processed utilising modern techniques but rather through primitive methods Mr. Haj explained.

These products are mainly processed during the spring, he added.

FAO plans have been developed for four cheese

processing plants and five milk collection centres into which approximately \$766,000 is to be invested, he affirmed.

The plants are to be set up in the north, centre and south, according to Mr. Haj.

He said that plans stipulate that the four processing plants receive 14,000 tonnes of goat and sheep milk daily, produced by 30,000 sheep and goats, owned by 300 breeders.

The project will benefit 600 women who will be milking the animals as well as those people working at

the plants, Mr. Haj maintained.

He said that the women will be trained in the most hygienic manner to implement their routine as well as ways to improve their work.

Mr. Haj estimated that the four plants will be capable of producing a daily total of 5,000 kilograms of cheese.

These are expected to yield profits at the rate of \$140 per tonne through the sale of the processed product, he concluded.

Musical prodigy overwhelms audience

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The piano concert which took place last Saturday at the residence of the Austrian envoy to Jordan and attended by HRH Princess Majda Raad may, in the near future, prove to have been a landmark in the musical history of the Kingdom.

Young Jordanian pianist Karim Basim Said, 8, played like a seasoned pro before an astounded audience who could hardly believe what it was hearing and which gave him the warmest, most sincere acclaim, culminating in a standing ovation.



Karim Basim Said

The programme included, among other pieces, Bach's Prelude in C minor, a sonata by Clementi, Chopin's Waltz in A minor, Mozart's Fantasia in D minor, Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" and Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 5.

Karim Said displayed an array of qualities that leave no doubt as to his future as a musician. Apart from sailing through the repertoire, he played with expression, giving the music the dynamics and the tempo variations it required.

The strength of his fingers belied his young age and his self-confidence was superior to many adult performers. Most of the pieces were completely memorised and played by

heart.

Karim Said is the youngest concert pianist in Jordan, ever. He is also, probably, the most promising one.

He has been studying since the age of five with Agnes Bashir. The benefits of the student-teacher interaction are more obvious than ever here. Ms. Bashir is not only training and supporting Karim technically but she has also much to do with his relaxed attitude before the audience — an element without which no performer can deliver good music. The psychological preparation of Karim for his first concert was itself a success.

Agnes Bashir also adapted some of the pieces — like the Hungarian Dance No. 5 — to Karim's little hands, playing two of them in duet with him.

Karim is already able to bring his own input by improvising — an unmistakable sign of musical maturity and maybe the influence of his father who is a known jazz guitarist. Many in the audience thought of Mozart during the concert, comparing Karim to Amadeus who also started to play in public at a very young age, in his case, six. This may be a little daring or too early to say. However, considering his age, the "absolutely amazing" (in the Austrian ambassador's words) quality of Karim's performance last Saturday, leaves all doors open for him in the future, making no dream impossible.

The concert was a charity event for the benefit of the Al Hussein Society for the Rehabilitation of the Physically Handicapped.

Srouf calls on Arab World to transcend differences

AMMAN (Petra) — Two days prior to an Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) Cairo meeting, Speaker of the Lower House Sa'ad Hayel Srouf Friday issued a call to Arab countries to transcend petty differences and coordinate political and economic stands concerning regional and international issues.

Mr. Srouf, departing today for Cairo at the head of a seven-member delegation, maintained that Jordan will be active in stimulating the revival of the idea of a common Arab market so that the Arab World can withstand challenges emerging as a result of regional and international financial blocs and establish a strong economic entity.

It is incumbent on Arab parliaments and governments to develop flexible economic systems so as to ensure the free flow of capital, goods and workers among Arab nations and allow a pooling of potential while encouraging economic growth, he said.

They must redress imbalances plaguing the economic systems of the Arab states, Mr. Srouf emphasised.

"Solidarity requires ending inter-Arab differences and it is incumbent upon our parliamentarians to strive to build the modern Arab state based on popular and democratic participation in government work as well as respect of human rights and continued dialogue between regimes and citizens through democratic institutions," the speaker affirmed.

"That which Arab societies require is a structural change at social, economic and political levels if it is to deal successfully with poverty and attain sustainable development and self-reliance," he stated.

Calling on parliamentarians to help alleviate disparities among the various sections of the Arab World, Mr. Srouf described national and pan-Arab interests as of greater importance than those of individual countries taken alone.

Parliaments can enact legislation which enable Arab countries to reach economic integration and can fulfil this objective with the private sector given a leading role in the process, he asserted.

Accompanying Mr. Srouf are two senators, Salem Masadeh and Taher Hikmat in addition to deputies Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh, Abdul Hadi Majali and Hameed Mansour as well as the Parliament Secretary General Zeid Zreikat.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Minister describes role of animal doctors

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha Friday described the role of veterinarians in Jordan as complementary to that of doctors. In a lecture at the Zarqa branch of the Veterinarians Association, Mr. Khreisha said, "we should improve and develop this profession through training veterinarians and holding regional and international seminars."

Abu Ein hails education for all

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Culture and Youth Qassem Abu Ein Friday called for bridging gaps between educational and cultural institutions. Dr. Abu Ein was speaking in a ceremony held at Irbid Private University to honour excellent students in northern governorates. "Culture and education are the right of everybody and it is our responsibility to raise future generations and educate them."

Society focuses on women's rights

KARAK (Petra) — The Arab Women's Society in Jordan Friday organised a training workshop regarding Jordanian women's rights. The workshop, held at Hazza' Majali Hall, focussed on women's parliamentary role and in the decision-making process. "We should elect those who represent the nation and who serve its interests," affirmed participating speaker, Deputy Toujan Faisal.

Government denies journalist's allegations of mistreatment

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government has denied any maltreatment of Fahd Rimawi, a journalist and editor of the weekly Al Majd, during his questioning by security services over a report published in his paper.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that Mr. Rimawi was not mistreated in any way as he has claimed in previous statements made to the local press.

Mr. Rimawi had told the Jordan Times that Tuesday evening he was called in for questioning and that, during the session, he was humiliated and slapped in the face.

He also claimed that the security officers cursed and insulted him.

The minister described Mr. Rimawi as committing a legal violation by publishing reports linked to the Jordanian Armed Forces and the security forces.

These, he said, are classified material

and could harm the forces and their related activities.

Mr. Mutawi confirmed that Mr. Rimawi was summoned and interrogated but stated that he was released with no harm done him.

The minister advised the press to allot due respect to higher national interests and thereby refrain from revealing classified information which could jeopardise national interests.

By law all news, commentary or drawings disparaging the security forces are prohibited.

Mr. Rimawi allegedly printed erroneous news regarding transfers of senior officers in the Public Security Department, the sources said.

Mr. Mutawi requested that the Jordanian press respect the ceiling of freedom within the law, warning that freedom of expression does not translate into legal violations.



ANNOUNCEMENT ISSUED BY JORDAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY TENDER NO. (23/97)

- PROJECT:** The supply installation and commissioning of the Fixed Medical equipment Group (2) to the King Abdullah Hospital project, Irbid, Jordan including training and warranty maintenance.
- The Central Tendering Committee, on behalf of the Jordan University of Science & Technology (JUST) has pleasure in inviting Local & International contractors to submit a tender proposal in competition for the above works.
- The Tender Documents can be obtained from:
Central Tendering Committee Offices
Jordan University of Science & Technology
Irbid-Jordan
- during working hours (Saturday-Wednesday) starting Monday May 12, 1997 till Monday June 9, 1997 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of JD 1000 (One Thousand) for the first set and JD300 (Three Hundreds) for each subsequent set.
- Tender proposals should be submitted by hand to:
Central Tendering Committee Offices
Jordan University of Science & Technology
Irbid-Jordan.
- Until 10:00 a.m. Local time on Wednesday, August 13, 1997. After which date and hour tendering shall be closed and no Tender proposals will be accepted. Tender proposals will be opened at 11:00 a.m. at the same day.
- Each Tender shall be accompanied by an acceptable Bid Security drawn in favour of the Jordan University of Science & Technology from or approval by an accredited bank in Jordan in an amount of not less than 3% from the total bid amount.
- Tender proposals not abiding by the above mentioned conditions and the conditions mentioned in the Tender documents will not be considered.

Chairman, Central Tenders Committee
University Vice President
Prof. M. Duwayri.

Late APC director eulogised in ceremony

AMMAN (J.T.) — The late Suleiman Hawari, formerly director of the Arab Polish Company (APC) who passed away last March, was Thursday eulogised at a ceremony held at the University of Jordan and attended by senior public figures, relatives and

friends.

A number of prominent personalities including former parliament deputies as well as President of the Jordan Press Association Suleiman Qudrah delivered addresses praising Mr. Hawari for his national dedication and as a responsible

official who offered valuable service to the nation through his enterprise to promote the APC as well as through other endeavours.

Two poems were delivered at the ceremony lauding Mr. Hawari.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- *Drawings by the students of the Nazareth School for Girls at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 21.
- *Pina Book Exhibition at the Bishop's School, Jabal Amman, until May 15.
- *Recent drawings and sculptures by Mona Saudi entitled "Petra Tablets" at her residence in Abdoun (Tel. 829700), until May 15.
- *Works by contemporary painters from the Arab World at Bal'na Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until May 15.
- *Works by Iraqi artist Nuri Al Rawi entitled

- "Departure of Innocence from the World" at Hamourabi Arts-Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until May 15.
- *Bani Hamida spring exhibition entitled "Crossing Borders" (displaying rugs, cushions, runners, and wallhangings) at the Jordan Contractors Association's Building, Deir Al Ghubur (Tel. 658696), until May 18.
- *Lithographs by Salam Kanaan at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani, (Tel. 681304) until May 13.
- *Exhibition of frescoes of Jordanian mosaics and Fayum portraits by Dorothy Mango at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 647858), until May 10.

Sonia Gandhi's membership gives major boost for India's Congress

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The entry of Sonia Gandhi into the Congress (I) Party has come as a windfall to the party which has slumped since the murder of her husband Rajiv Gandhi six years ago, analysts said Friday.

Political pundits and the media predicted the inevitable elevation of the 50-year-old widow to the party's highest forum and said her decision could resurrect the party fortunes.

Sitaram Kesri, who worked as Congress treasurer under Rajiv Gandhi and his mother Indira Gandhi to become the party's powerful president in December, said: "The Congress had become weak when it got de-linked from the Gandhi-Nehru family. Now, it will regain its strength."

"The party will not do anything against her wishes," Mr. Kesri said and hinted he was not averse to her taking over the reins of the 112-year-old Congress.

"Way back in 1991, we

had urged her to take over the reins of the party," said Mr. Kesri of an emotional appeal he himself had made in a joint gathering of members of parliament after her husband's assassination.

Added Digvijay Singh, chief minister of Madhya Pradesh state and member of the policy-making Congress Working Committee: "Sonia Gandhi will be the greatest asset to the Congress under the present circumstances."

"Her decision honours the feelings of millions of congressmen who wanted to see her as an active member of the party."

The Pioneer said: "Over the next few months, party leaders are bound to flock to her in the hope that she will lead them on their way back to power."

"The time-frame may be uncertain but her eventual membership in the party's highest decision-making body, its Working Committee, is a forgone conclusion," it added.

Others in the Congress, however, felt that her decision to join the party was timed with plans of a federal agency to unveil next week its investigations into a multi-billion-dollar arms purchase scandal which erupted during Rajiv Gandhi's regime.

Italian-born Sonia, who is counted among the most powerful Indians, joined the Congress on March 21, but the step was officially announced Thursday.

"She may be wanting to tell the government that if her slain husband's name is dragged into the case, she will not take it lying down and will launch a political battle," the Times of India quoted a Congress leader as saying.

The Congress said her entry would "enthuse, galvanise and electrify" the party, dominated for much of this century by her mother-in-law Indira Gandhi and her husband's grandfather

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister.

The Congress, which lost power last year, gives parliamentary support to a fragile ruling coalition in a desperate bid to keep right-wing Hindus in the opposition from taking power.

Sonia had repeatedly refused to be drawn into politics since her husband, prime minister from 1984 to 1989, was killed on May 21, 1991 by a suicide bomber while campaigning in southern India.

She distanced herself from the Congress when it suffered a string of electoral defeats in provincial balloting under former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1994.

She refused to relent and join the Congress two years later after the party under Mr. Rao faced a humiliating defeat in general elections, which produced a badly fractured parliament.

71 die as truck falls into ravine in India

NEW DELHI (AFP) — At least 71 people were killed and eight others injured when a truck carrying them to a wedding plunged into a ravine Thursday in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, officials said Friday.

Seventy victims died on the spot while another succumbed to his injuries on the way to a hospital, the officials said.

The police said an unspecified number of children and women travelling with the bridegroom's party to the wedding were among those crushed to death in the state's Hamirpur district.

Hamirpur Police Chief Sanjeev Rana said the overcrowded truck lost control on a mountainous road and toppled into a ravine Thursday night while travelling from the village of Baroha to a wedding in another village nearby.

Four of the critically injured have been hospitalised in the city of Chandigarh, Mr. Rana said.

He said all the bodies had been removed from the wreckage by paramilitary soldiers and local volunteers who reached the site of the crash earlier Friday.

The Press Trust of India said at least 90 people were travelling on the privately-owned truck from Baroha, home of the bridegroom who was travelling to the village of Bihar to marry.

The crash wiped out entire families while some lost their main bread earners, officials said.

The victims were being identified at the district hospital while authorities were making arrangements for a mass cremation, the police added.

Most of the victims were trapped underneath the overturned vehicle and died before help could come to the remote site, Police Chief Rana said.

The soldiers and a medical team were camping at the crash zone, 10 kilometres from Hamirpur, officials said in Shimla, capital of the northern Indian resort state.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadr Singh expressed shock and offered \$700 to relatives of each of those killed in the crash.

India's most controversial missile ready for use

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Two versions of India's most controversial "Prithvi" (Earth) missiles have been developed and are ready for use, The Hindu newspaper said Friday.

The daily quoting India's minister of state for defence, N.V.N. Somu, said the 150-kilometre and the 250-kilometre range models of the indigenously-built Prithvi have been fully developed.

"Development of the 150-kilometre version Prithvi for the army has been completed successfully and subsequent activities are in progress," The Hindu quoted Mr. Somu as saying.

"No further tests will be required before its induction into the army," Mr. Somu said and added the longer-range Prithvi has also been fully developed for the Indian Air Force.

The air force will use its Prithvi, which can carry a one-tonne warhead, against airfields, radar stations and other strategic installations in the event of war.

The army's shorter-range surface-to-surface missile, which was last tested successfully on Feb. 23, has been developed to attack oil terminals, railway facilities and other "high-value" sites.

Both the systems have been tested 16 times since Feb. 16, 1982 as part of an ambitious programme to build an array of guided missiles.

India compares its "Akash" (Sky), which has a nine-kilometre range, with the U.S.-built Patriots, successfully deployed to shoot down Iraqi Scud missiles fired at Saudi Arabia and Israel during the Gulf War.

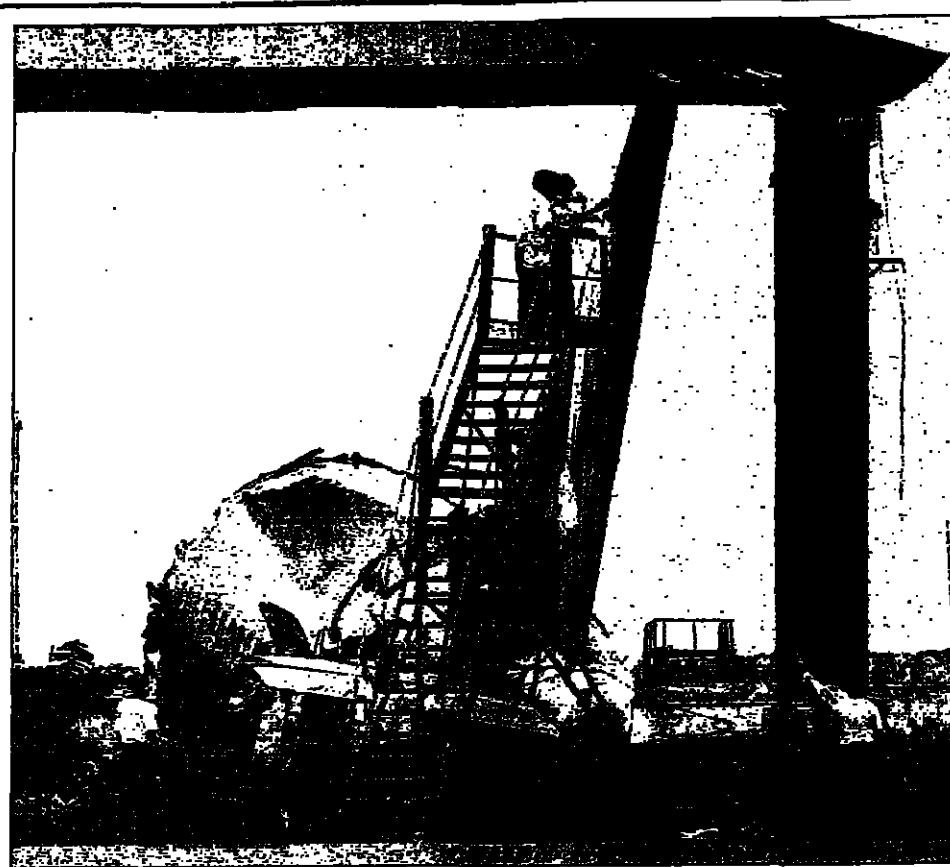
The United States has urged India not to deploy the Prithvi, one of the five missiles being developed here, warning its mass production could further fuel regional hostility and trigger a nuclear arms race.

Pakistan, with which India has fought three wars, has also voiced fears over the controversial Prithvi saying the system was targeted against it.

Indian experts argue that arms acquisition by Pakistan, which has recently bought Chinese M-11 missiles, and Chinese troops deployed near the Indian border, left Delhi with no choice but to build rockets and missiles.

India in February hiked its military spending by 21 per cent to \$10.2 billion in its federal budget for the financial year to March 1998. The increase was \$1.8 billion over the previous year's allocation.

Arch-rivals India and Pakistan are not signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.



Chinese inspectors Friday examine the fuselage and tail section of Southern Airlines' Boeing 737-300 plane which slammed into the tarmac Thursday night during a thunderstorm at an airport in Shenzhen. At least 35 people were killed in China's first big aviation disaster for almost three years (Reuters photo)

China plane crash kills 35

BEIJING (R) — At least 35 people were killed in China's first big aviation disaster for almost three years when a Boeing 737-300 crashed while landing in the southern city of Shenzhen, officials said Friday.

China Southern Airlines Flight CZ3456 from the southwestern city of Chongqing slammed into the tarmac during a thunderstorm at an airport in Shenzhen, a prosperous city on the Chinese border with Hong Kong, local officials said.

Rescue workers had found the airliner's flight recorder, or black box, but the cause of the crash was not yet clear, officials said.

The three-year-old aircraft, carrying 65 passengers and nine crew, broke up into three main pieces and burst into flames at about 9.30 p.m. (1330 GMT) Thursday, officials said.

A Shenzhen city government official said 35 people, two of them crew members, were killed.

At least 16 Thais were believed to have been among 35 people killed, a city government official said Friday.

"From the figures we can calculate that at least 16 Thais are dead," the official said by telephone from Shenzhen.

Of 25 Thai tourists on the ill-fated flight, only five had been found among 35

injured people, the official said.

Four passengers remain unaccounted for, meaning that at least 16 Thais appear to be among the dead, he said.

One Hong Kong resident and a Taiwanese were among the injured survivors.

"There were no Europeans or Americans," the city government official said. Staff at one Shenzhen hospital said two middle-aged Thai men had been injured but their condition was not serious.

The Hong Kong Standard quoted a spokesman for Shenzhen's People's Hospital as saying one Thai woman was admitted with multiple fractures of her knees, ribs and head, but her condition was stable.

A spokesman for Boeing Co. said the U.S. aircraft manufacturer had sent a team to Shenzhen to investigate the crash, but information had so far proved hard to obtain.

"It's pretty chaotic out there," the Boeing spokesman said.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China had also sent its own investigators to examine the crash site.

Officials have said the aircraft appeared to have difficulty with its positioning and angle during its approach.

"The attitude of the plane

during landing was wrong," one airline official said by telephone after the crash.

The airliner's co-pilot was among those killed by the impact or by the blaze that tore through the aircraft immediately afterwards, another official said.

The disaster was the first to hit China Southern since another of its fleet of about 35 Boeing 737s slammed into a hill near the scenic southern city of Guilin in November, 1992. That accident killed all 141 people aboard.

Chinese aviation officials had been celebrating almost three years without a serious accident, a record credited to improved precautions taken after a Russian-made Tupolev-154 exploded in mid-air after takeoff on a domestic flight in June, 1994.

That catastrophe killed 160 people, making it the worst reported accident in China's aviation history.

It occurred just months after the International Airline Passengers Association cited China as one of the most dangerous places in the world to fly after five aircraft crashed in 1993 and 10 airliners were hijacked to Taiwan.

In 1992, a series of accidents over a four-month period killed 276 passengers, including many foreigners.

China ratifies Indian border treaty

BEIJING (AFP) — China's top legislative body Friday ratified an bilateral agreement to demilitarise the Sino-Indian border, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) approved the treaty as it closed its 25th session, the report said.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and then Indian counterpart Inder Kumar Gujral last November signed the pact to slash troops and armaments on

their disputed border.

The deal came during a landmark state visit to India by Chinese President Jiang Zemin — the first since the two neighbours fought a brief but bitter frontier war in 1962.

Xinhua provided no details of the agreement, but according to Indian sources, the two sides agreed to reduce border troops to minimal levels, withdraw major heavy weapons and end large-scale military manoeuvres.

The two sides, who withdrew their ambassadors for

14 years after the war, also agreed to stop flying combat aircraft within 10 kilometres of the line of actual control, the sources said.

The NPC is largely seen as a rubber-stamp body, but it has been known to hold up legislation in the past when it does not approve. The National Defence Law, passed at the last full session, was held up for a number of years because of disagreements over the chain of command between the army, government and Communist Party.

Clinton to visit Costa Rican rainforest

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (R) — U.S. President Bill Clinton will venture into the tropical rain forest to praise Costa Rica's acclaimed conservation efforts and call attention to the global threat of deforestation.

On a visit to the Braulio Carrillo National Park outside the capital, San Jose, Mr. Clinton will get a personal view of this nation's well-preserved forests — a world symbol of the benefits of conservation.

After a Thursday summit meeting with the leaders of six Central American nations and the Dominican Republic, Mr. Clinton will tour a misty, exotic woodland in the clouds, teeming with brightly coloured birds and countless species of plants and precious hardwood trees.

Ecotourism is booming here, having replaced coffee as Costa Rica's top export earner. And while the summit revolved mostly around trade and immigration

issues, the environment was also a major topic on Mr. Clinton's list, officials said.

"The president will talk about efforts that we are engaged with in this region to work with (Central Americans) on environment ... and will also talk about our global environmental agenda," White House spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters earlier.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation has estimated that 38 million acres (15 million hectares) of the world's forests are lost each year, mostly in the Third World.

The problem is particularly acute in other Central American countries, where poor peasants regularly burn tracts of woodland to make room for planting crops or grazing cattle.

Since arriving Wednesday, Mr. Clinton has repeatedly praised conservation efforts in Costa Rica, a country of 3.3 million people that claims to be home

to nearly six per cent of the world's known plant and animal species.

"The tropical rain forests in our country are genetic libraries for humanity," Marco Antonio Gonzalez, Costa Rica's vice minister of environment, told Reuters in an interview.

Costa Rica's extensive national park system was launched by a former environment minister after he visited Yellowstone National Park in the United States in 1968.

But Costa Ricans say the real boost for environmental management came when former President Oscar Arias won the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize for engineering a landmark peace agreement for his warring Central American neighbours.

"Costa Rica was put on the world map with the Nobel Peace Prize," Mr. Gonzalez said. "A lot of tourists started to look at Costa Rica."

Italy arrest 11 in blow to Sicilian mafia

PALERMO, Sicily (R) — Police Thursday said they had arrested 11 suspected leading members of the mafia's bloody Corleonesi clan in what could prove a further severe blow to its supremacy in the world of Sicilian organised crime.

The arrests, ordered by prosecutors in the Sicilian capital Palermo, netted 11 so-called "men of honour" whose ties to *cosa nostra* were exposed by mafia turncoats, investigators said.

Chief among them was Mario Salvatore Grizzaffi, nephew of jailed Corleonesi clan leader and mafia "boss of bosses" Salvatore "the beast" Riina.

State television said the operation had "decapitated" the Corleonesi, many of whose historical figures have followed Riina to jail since he was captured in January 1993 after almost a quarter of a century on the run.

Judicial sources said Mr. Grizzaffi, 31, was suspected of having sat at mafia summits with Mr. Riina's son Giovanni. Arrested last year and now serving a jail term for mafia membership.

Prosecutors allege that the 11, ranging in age from 27 to 67, had also sheltered mafiosi on the run, stored weapons and blackmailed businessmen.

Giuseppe Micalizio, deputy head of the elite DIA anti-mafia squad, said evidence from turncoats, including defectors from Mr. Riina's own clans, had exposed the suspects' links to the mob.

Mr. Grizzaffi and five of the other men arrested had no previous criminal record.

"These are people from a variety of backgrounds. Some are farmers, some of them artisans and others were in the earth-moving business," Mr. Micalizio told Italian radio.

The innocence of the pursuits is typical of how the mafia has operated in Sicily, concealing a multi-billion dollar empire of crime behind the facade of a modest lifestyle and a deadly code of "omertà," or silence.

In a separate operation Wednesday, police said they had confiscated assets worth more than one trillion lire (\$590 million) from a jailed Sicilian construction company owner, Vincenzo Piazza.

Mr. Piazza, who has been in prison for three years on charges of links with the mafia, officially declared a gross monthly income of 1.8 million lire (\$1,000 in 1989).

Mr. Riina, who declared himself a "simple peasant" when he was arrested, held what was arguably the bloodiest sway ever over the mafia.

His clan, from the hilltop town of Corleone immortalised in Hollywood's Godfather movies, ranked as "country cousins" to the dominant Palermo families until the 1970s.

Its irresistible rise was achieved through a reign of terror which shook even the mob and, many investigators say, encouraged terrified fellow mafiosi to seek protection from the state by turning themselves in to give evidence.

Corleonesi control of *cosa nostra* culminated in the killings in 1992 of top anti-mafia judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino in an all-out war on the state.

Public outrage at the killings spurred the most serious police assault on the mafia since the days of Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

Mr. Riina's arrest was followed by that of his brother-in-law Leoluca Bagarella and, last year, of the Corleonesi's suspected "military chief," Giovanni Brusca.

Pentagon to probe charges in scandal

WASHINGTON (R) — The Pentagon has said it would investigate allegations that a number of sex harassment cases against black army drill sergeants and the service's top enlisted man might be racially motivated.

"Those charges will be examined... We take any allegation of irregularity seriously," Defence Department spokesman Ken Bacon told reporters in response to questions.

But Mr. Bacon stressed at the Defence Department's regular news briefing that the U.S. military "remains an exemplary institution in dealing with the question of race," offering equal opportunity for enlistment, support and promotion.

He declined to give details or to comment on specific cases, including the army's charges Wednesday of adultery and assault against its top enlisted man, army Sgt. Maj. Gene McKinney.

Sgt. McKinney, a black, is accused by four white female servicewomen of sexual harassment.

The 46-year-old McKinney denied the charges and said in a statement Wednesday he believed race was "driving this investigation and the way it is being conducted."

Sgt. McKinney's attorney said he, too, was disturbed by allegations that army investigators had asked witnesses if Sgt. McKinney was specifically interested in sex with white women.

The army's Criminal Investigation Command denied race was an issue in the investigation of Sgt. McKinney or others.

The McKinney case was the latest development in an army harassment scandal that includes charges of rape of women recruits, many of them white, by a number of drill sergeants and trainers, most of them black, at several training bases.

Army Staff Sgt. Delmar Simpson, a key figure in one of the worst U.S. military sex scandals, was sentenced Tuesday to 25 years in prison for raping six women and other sexual offences at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

Some critics accused the army in the Simpson and other cases of being too willing to accept the charges of white women against black men.

"I don't believe it is a problem," Mr. Bacon said, when asked by reporters if the issue was creating racial tension in the armed forces.

"I think that the military remains an exemplary institution in dealing with the question of race," he said.

"We train everybody equally to work as a team and to trust one another. The military has a very well-defined promotion system where everybody is treated equally to the best of the system's ability,"



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (left) smiles as he congratulates World War II veterans during a parade on the Red Square Friday. Russia celebrates the 52nd anniversary of the allied forces' victory over Nazi Germany on May 9, a day later than in most of the allied countries (Reuters photo)

Yeltsin hails 'glorious traditions' of Russian army

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin praised the "glorious traditions" of the Russian Armed Forces in a Victory Day speech in Moscow's Red Square Friday, as military units paraded to mark the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

It was the third annual parade on Red Square since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, but as in previous years there was no heavy military equipment, such as armoured vehicles and missiles, in striking contrast to the Soviet-era parades.

The military parade on Red Square in honour of Victory Day is a symbol of the Russian soldiers' loyalty to the glorious traditions of

the heroes of the great Patriotic War," Mr. Yeltsin told the crowd of bemuddled war veterans and contemporary servicemen. Mr. Yeltsin's brief speech and the parade were carried live on Russian television.

"It is the holy duty of the Russian army to maintain and multiply those traditions. May the exemplary feat of the people, who created that great victory, live on for centuries," he said.

Elite units from all services of the armed forces as well as military cadets paraded past Mr. Yeltsin, government ministers and other dignitaries, who stood in front of the Lenin Mausoleum outside the Kremlin. Soldiers carried the victory flag bearing a gold five-

pointed star, and other red banners with the Communist hammer and sickle.

Mr. Yeltsin signed a decree in April 1996 restoring the Soviet victory flag as an official symbol for ceremonies that mark the victory over Nazi Germany. In a message to the nation, released by the Kremlin Press Service, Mr. Yeltsin said: "The pain in Russian hearts will never fade: Victory Day will remain a holiday with tears for all of us."

"The war period gave us back a sense of dignity, without which there is no road to freedom or democracy," he said, adding that Russia "is eternally indebted to those who died and the survivors."

Interfax News Agency reported that Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov sent messages to Mr. Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin greeting them on behalf of the Chechen people.

"The horrors and sufferings of World War II will remain in the memory of the Chechen people forever," the messages said.

"The Chechen people sincerely wish the war veterans and people of Russia good health, happiness, prosperity and peace," it added.

Russia and Chechen separatist leaders signed a peace deal last August ending a 21-month conflict in the breakaway republic, in which an estimated 50,000 people died.

Senate committee links CFE changes to missile defence

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Changes to the CFE treaty that will give Russia flexibility in its military deployment in the Caucasus and on its northwestern flank were sent to the full Senate Thursday — with a hitch.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee included in its endorsement of changes to the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty a provision that would allow the Senate to reopen debate on the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) defence treaty.

Conservative Republican Chairman Jesse Helms said he would oppose changing the CFE treaty if it did not include the provision requiring the Senate to approve the adherence of former Soviet republics to the ABM treaty.

Sen. Helms argued that the Senate must ratify what he termed as attempts to "multilateralise" the 1972 ABM treaty signed between the United States and the former Soviet Union.

The administration maintains that the four nuclear states of the former Soviet Union — Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan — became parties to the ABM treaty when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

But Sen. Helms has been trying to submit that change for Senate approval in what was seen as a ploy to allow for long-sought changes to the ABM treaty concerning theatre defence.

While there is bipartisan support for the CFE flank agreement in the Senate, Sen. Helms' comments made it appear he would hold the CFE changes hostage to the ABM provision.

Democrats on the panel said Senate ratification — which requires a two-thirds vote — was not necessary for the former Soviet republics to become parties to the ABM treaty in line with international law.

Zairean rebel troops are 'beyond Kenge on their way to Kinshasa'

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (AFP) — Zairean rebel troops are 50 kilometres beyond Kenge on the way to the capital Kinshasa, rebel "foreign minister" Bizima Karaha told reporters Friday.

"There was serious fighting going on yesterday," he said, adding that the rebels were fighting Angolans who were part of Jonas Savimbi's former rebel movement and Rwandan Hutus who were members of the army defeated by rebel Tutsis in Rwanda's 1994 civil war.

No Zairean army soldiers were fighting, he said. President Mobutu Sese Seko's regime long supported Mr. Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) before it sealed a peace pact with the Luanda government in 1994.

Mr. Karaha's claim was partly at odds with reports from Kinshasa, where a Western source said the rebels were Friday still fighting Zairean government troops for the town of Kenge.

However, government soldiers who had Thursday surrounded the rebel-held town, 330 kilometres east of Kinshasa by road, have pulled back westwards, said the source, who asked not to be named.

Most of the fighting was centred around Bukanza-Longo, less than 40 kilometres from Kenge. Humanitarian agencies based in Kinshasa and trying to maintain links with aid workers in the region could not give any casualty figures.

On Wednesday, fighting around Kenge claimed the lives of 85 rebels and 15 government soldiers, while many guerrillas in Laurent Kabila's rebel alliance were wounded, a Western diplomatic source said.

About 200 civilians were killed in circumstances that remain unclear and many villagers have fled their homes to take refuge in the tropical forest.

The rebels, who have seized two-thirds of the vast, impoverished nation, Wednesday took the town of Bandundu, about 300 kilometres northeast of Kinshasa, without a fight after government troops pulled out under pressure from local people.

The heavy fighting at Kenge marked the first time government soldiers have put up strong resistance to check the rebels since a battle for the key town of Gombe, one of Kabila's first gains in the far east of the country, last November.

A Western military expert said that almost 3,000 Zairean soldiers had been "reconditioned" and been given \$200 apiece to go to the front lines. The average wage of a Zairean soldier — when he gets paid at all — is no more than \$1 per month.

The demoralised and unmotivated rag-tag army had hitherto proved no match for the rebels, who seized town after town after government soldiers pulled out after looting them.

About 2,000 soldiers have been sent to Kenge to stall the rebel advance on Kinshasa.

Meanwhile, U.N. sources said Friday Mr. Mobutu and

Mr. Kabila have agreed in principle to hold a meeting next Wednesday on board a South African ship.

The sources said there was "agreement" from both sides but no "guarantee."

Mr. Karaha earlier said Mr. Kabila still intended to attend the meeting with Mr. Mobutu which was set at their last meeting for May 14.

Mr. Karaha, who was speaking just before South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki arrived in Lubumbashi for talks with Mr. Kabila, said there was "a good chance" the meeting would be held, adding that it had been set for 10 days after the two men's last shipboard encounter on May 4 in the Congolese port of Pointe-Noire.

The sources in Geneva also said the meeting had been pencilled in during the initial encounter between the rival leaders.

They said that Mr. Mobutu's stance was that he would not run in forthcoming elections, adding that what he wanted was to leave Zaire as gracefully as possible.

In Gabon, The Libreville Declaration signed Thursday by central African leaders including Mr. Mobutu, called for a peaceful and "politically negotiated solution to the conflict."

The "extraordinary summit" held at Mr. Mobutu's request and hosted by Gabonese President Omar Bongo, was attended by their counterparts from Congo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and the Central African Republic.

The leaders examined the Zairean situation in the light of the May 4 meeting between Mr. Mobutu and Mr. Kabila.

In the communique, the African presidents "reiterated their commitment to a politically negotiated solution to the conflict and to the rejection of all forms of violence as a means of settling conflict."

The Libreville Declaration called on the conflicting parties to cease all hostilities immediately.

The leaders called on the two sides immediately to respect the accords freely signed during the Organisation of African Unity's special summit in Lome on March 27 as well as the Pretoria communique of April 8.

They reaffirmed their own commitment to the peace plan drawn up by the United Nations and the OAU, in particular the 1097 Resolution adopted by the U.N. Security Council on Feb. 18, endorsing a plan for a ceasefire and a transition to free and fair elections.

The Libreville Declaration acknowledged Mr. Mobutu's "important declaration" that he would not stand in presidential elections in his country "for health reasons, which opens new perspectives for a political and negotiated settlement to the conflict," said the statement.

The presidents immediately invited "all Zairean political forces, under the direction of the High Council of the Republic/Transitional Parliament, to proceed with the election of a president to optimise the orderly and democratic transition in accord with the constitutional act of the transition."

Kohl hears Tung assurances about post-97 H. Kong

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's future leader, Tung Chee-Hwa, assailed at home and overseas for plans to tighten civil liberties laws after the handover, put his case for change to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl Friday.

Mr. Kohl held talks with Mr. Tung shortly after arriving in the British colony from New Zealand for a fleeting visit.

He was scheduled to meet outgoing British Governor Chris Patten over lunch.

Hong Kong, a British colony for more than 150 years, reverts to China at midnight on June 30, a date now 54 days away.

Mr. Tung, a billionaire

shipowner anointed as post-colonial leader in December, has ignited controversy at home and overseas with plans to roll back key clauses in Hong Kong's civil liberties laws. He argues the changes, endorsed by China, are needed to preserve stability in the wealthy community of 6.4 million people.

He fuelled the dispute earlier this week when he said demonstrations promoting independence for Taiwan or Tibet should not be allowed in post-colonial Hong Kong.

Mr. Tung assured Mr. Kohl that China would stand by its promises to permit Hong Kong quasi-au-

tonomy and to maintain its capitalist way of life and freedoms after the handover, members of the German delegation said.

The pledges were codified in the 1984 Sino-British treaty on the transition and spelt out in the basic law, the China-promulgated constitution for Hong Kong.

Mr. Tung expressed confidence that Hong Kong would remain a stable and prosperous economy.

Pro-democracy legislators have angered Mr. Tung by campaigning actively at home and overseas against the proposed changes, which include requiring demonstrators to get police permits before staging pro-

tests and prohibiting foreign funding for local political parties.

Martin Lee, leader of the populist Democratic Party who will lose his seat when China disbands the elected legislature upon the handover, undertook an exhaustive lobbying trip in Europe and the United States which culminated in a meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Mr. Tung lashed out at Mr. Lee for "badmouthing" Hong Kong abroad but had to cancel his own tentative plans to visit North America to lay out his vision for governing Hong Kong due to pressure of work.

Italian police arrest Venice belltower separatists

VENICE, Italy (R) — Italian police stormed the belltower in St. Mark's Square in Venice Friday and arrested eight separatists, who had occupied the landmark in a bizarre bid for an independent state in the lagoon city.

Masked paramilitary Carabinieri Special Forces scaled part of the outside of the 99 metre tower by telescopic ladder. They entered through a low level balcony and used an internal staircase to burst in on the protest, witnesses said.

Reporters saw the eight protesters being dragged away by armed police. Some were arrested in the tower and others in the square below in a home-made black and green military-style armoured vehicle and in a camper van, police said.

Several members of the group, almost all in their 20s and 30s, were dressed in military-style combat fatigues.

One shouted "long live St. Mark" in a Venetian accent

as he was led off by police to cries of "shame" and "you should be thrown in the lagoon" from onlookers.

Police and the main separatist party in Italy, the Northern League, separately described the protest as madness.

The police action, involving 30 commandos, took place about five hours after the group had broken into the tower.

Police said the group had commandeered a "Vaporetto" ferry shortly after midnight to take them, their six-wheeled armoured vehicle and the van down the Grand Canal to St. Mark's Square, one of the world's most famous tourist draws.

Police earlier said they believed the protesters were armed but it was not clear whether any weapons had been found. No shots were heard in the special forces assault and there were no reports of injuries.

"When they realised they didn't have a chance most of them didn't put up any

resistance," said Lieutenant Colonel Claudio Nasta, a senior police officer in Venice.

The group had hoisted a banner bearing the symbol of the Lion of St. Mark from the top of the tower and issued a statement describing themselves as a regular unit of the army of the "most serene republic of Venice."

"After 200 years, a regular unit of the most serene Venetian army has tonight liberated St. Mark's Square," the statement said.

"The most Serene republic of Venice has been reborn today...Long live St. Mark."

Venice was for centuries a powerful independent power with territories stretching down the Adriatic and into the Middle East. Known as the "Most Serene Republic" it came to an end on May 12, 1797 when French Napoleonic forces entered the city.

Friday's protest linked the demonstrators to a shadowy group that has interrupted

state television news bulletins in the northeast Venetian region for two months with calls for a separate Venetian state.

The pirate broadcasts have spoken of a "spectacular action" in the canal city to mark next Monday's 200th anniversary of the fall of the Venetian Republic.

Separatist sentiment has grown in affluent northern Italy in the 1990s, spurred first by political corruption scandals and later by resentment at high taxes and central bureaucracy.

The secessionist Northern League last September declared a symbolic republic of "Padania" at a rally in Venice but derided the belltower protest, which firebrand League leader Umberto Bossi called "the stuff of madmen."

"Finding an armoured car and going to St. Mark's Square to stand there and raise a little flag is no way to stage a revolution," Mr. Bossi told Italian radio.

Defector presumes N. Korea has nuclear arms but cannot prove it

SEOUL (R) — A senior North Korean official who defected to South Korea earlier this year has told Seoul investigators he presumes the North has nuclear weapons but cannot prove it, Seoul's intelligence chief said Friday.

Kwon Young-Hae, head of the agency for National Security Planning (NSP), told a parliamentary committee that Hwang Jang-Yop had no details about any nuclear capability because he did not have access to military secrets.

Mr. Hwang, the highest-ranked official ever to flee North Korea, has been questioned by NSP investigators since he arrived in South Korea last month.

"Mr. Hwang said he presumed North Korea possessed nuclear weapons as it withdrew from the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) in 1993 while refusing inspections of atomic sites by the IAEA," Mr. Kwon said.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, said in April that North Korea had yet to account for an amount of nuclear-grade plutonium

that experts say it possesses. The IAEA has never been able to confirm that the North has a nuclear device but insists it has fissionable material it is not owning up to.

A crisis over Pyongyang's suspected nuclear weapons programme was defused after North Korea agreed to dismantle its nuclear facilities in return for safer reactors promised by the United States under a landmark accord signed in Geneva in 1994.

Mr. Hwang, the architect of North Korea's guiding ideology of self-reliance or "Juche," defected in Beijing on Feb. 12.

When he arrived in South Korea on April 20, he said Pyongyang's leaders had abandoned hope for their impoverished, famine-stricken nation, were not interested in dialogue with the South and had set the nation on course for war.

Two days after Mr. Hwang's arrival, the Chosun Ilbo daily newspaper quoted a document it said he wrote in August, as he prepared to flee his homeland, saying North Korea could turn the South into a "sea of flames" in a nuclear

attack.

"The North can turn the South into a sea of flames and annihilate it by using nuclear and chemical weapons and rockets," the document said.

Mr. Kwon said Friday that Mr. Hwang had told NSP investigators that North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il made all major policy decisions by himself.

North Korea has focused efforts on preparing for a war since 1974 when Kim Jong-Il began playing a leading political role in Pyongyang and a "war atmosphere has dominated since December 1991 when he became the supreme commander (of the army)," Mr. Kwon quoted Mr. Hwang as saying.

The North believes if it wages war it will undoubtedly win, and if the United States intervenes, it plans to send suicide squads to bomb U.S. aircraft carriers to create anti-war sentiment in America, Mr. Hwang was quoted as saying.

Diplomats have said Mr. Hwang could give an insight into the state of the recalcitrant nation's government and military as it grapples with economic catastrophe.

Azeris pledge to take back Karabakh 'through all means'

ANKARA (AFP) — Azerbaijan's visiting President Geydar Aliyev has said that his country would consider all means to take back the Armenian-held enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in the troubled Caucasus.

"We favour a peaceful settlement to the problem, but if it does not happen, we will definitely take back our lands under (Armenian) occupation using every method no matter what this will cause," Mr. Aliyev told a meeting in the western town of Izmir.

"We won't give our land away, we won't give concessions from Azerbaijan's territorial integrity," Mr. Aliyev said, according to the Anatolia News Agency.

Nagorno-Karabakh — an enclave inside oil-rich Azerbaijan, but mainly populated by Armenians — fell under the control of the Armenians after a bloody war between 1988 and 1994.

Efforts by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the for-

mer republics have failed so far. Western diplomats said lack of a political solution to the Karabakh dispute has caused unease in Azerbaijan, which could consider resorting to arms to try to recapture the enclave.

Azerbaijan says Karabakh is Azerbaijani land under to the former Soviet constitution and calls on the international community to take measures to preserve its territorial integrity.

Dismissing the Azerbaijani claim, ethnic Armenians controlling Karabakh have been consolidating their grip on the enclave.

More than 20,000 people had been killed in the six-year war over Karabakh. A fragile ceasefire has generally been holding since May 1994, but in sporadic clashes on the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia in April, dozens of people were reported dead.

Mr. Aliyev, who is on a four-day visit to Turkey, complained that Armenia had been receiving modern tanks and missile systems from Russia.

Pakistan arrests Sunni Muslim extremist leader

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — A leader of a Sunni Muslim extremist party was arrested as Pakistan decided to enact a new law aimed at crushing militant sectarian groups that have killed dozens of people in recent months, official sources said Friday.

Maulana Ali Sher Haider, secretary general of the Sepah-i-Sahaba Party (SSP), was arrested Thursday in Sukkur, southern Pakistan, as police cracked down on

sectarian groups.

So far 85 members of SSP and their rival Shiite Muslim Sipah-i-Mohammad Party (SMP) have been arrested this week, police sources said.

Maulan Azam Tariq, head of the SSP and a member of the Punjab Provincial Assembly, was arrested Tuesday.

The SSP in a statement condemned the arrests and demanded immediate re-

lease of their leaders.

At a parliamentary meeting here Thursday Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif agreed to introduce within a week a tough law to combat sectarian violence, as the Muslim holy month of Moharram started Friday.

The government has decided to set up special anti-terrorism courts in Punjab province, the hub of sectarian violence, to speed up the trial of cases of sectarian

violence and terrorism, official sources said.

Shiites commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, grandson of Prophet Mohammad, on the 10th day of Moharram (May 19) by beating their chests and flagellation with bare chests and flagellation with sharp knives, a practice condemned by the Sunnis.

Often such Shiite processions trigger violence in Pakistan where Sunnis are a majority.

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Interacting with the 'other'

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan insightfully observed last week that normalisation of cultural relations is not only lacking between Arabs and other cultures but also amongst the Arabs themselves. Normalisation of cultural relations among Arabs is unfortunately a political affair related to the role that culture has assumed under different Arab regimes. Whether we like it or not, and although some authors and writers have managed to break the walls of borders and censorship erected by various regimes, different Arab countries have developed different "cultures" which identify with and mostly praise the political elite in each particular country. There is very little that can be accomplished on this front in this epoch of Arab history. Only when democracy takes hold in these countries and freedom of expression becomes universal will genuine cultural exchange take place.

Meanwhile, Arab cultural interaction with other civilisation, especially the West, is now at its lowest ebb. Save for a few Arab writers who are translated into English, French and a few other European and Asian languages, there is no real effort to build bridges of understanding with others. Translations from living languages are very rare and most of the works which are being dished into the market are of very poor quality and often pirated without the consent of their authors and publishers.

Everyday, everywhere in the world, tens of new titles in philosophy, religion, politics, history, social and applied sciences and fiction hit the book stands. Those new publications, often produced by hard-working, credible authors, contain the latest achievements in the human search for truth. They are not based exclusively on the developments of each civilisation apart. Many of them are based on a long tradition of interaction between different cultures.

Unlike the beginning of this century when translation flourished in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and the Maghreb and when translators were both a respected and self-respecting breed, translation now is mostly left to amateurs. Furthermore, there seems to be a notion held by many of our "intellectuals" that as do we have all the answers to the questions of existence and the hereafter — we do not need other aliens to speak to us of global realities.

This, of course, is patently absurd. There is a great deal of knowledge out there in the world and a great deal more to be explored. Isolating ourselves and rejecting "the other" will only lead to our own banishment. Translating, however, is an awesome task that requires huge funds and armies of men and women. It should not be left to individual endeavour alone. It requires the collective input of all governments.

Only through reading from other nations and understanding them can we demand that others attempt to understand us. And we need to understand and be understood.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THROUGH HIS practices, Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu has assassinated the peace process and his government's measures have created new facts on the ground, especially with regard to the confiscation of Arab lands and the construction of settlements, said a writer for Al Aswaq. There is no alternative to the creation of a United Arab front with great military potential to force Israel to retreat from its present stand and recognise Arab rights, said Rashid Hassan. The writer said Israel does not give any regard to the Arab demands for exchange of land for peace and has no respect for the Palestinian people's claim over Jerusalem, which was occupied in the 1967 war, nor has Israel any respect for U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 which calls for its withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. What Israel is doing now, he said, is a judaisation of the Arab land, particularly Arab Jerusalem, distorting historic facts, changing the demographic character of the Holy City and depriving the Palestinians of the right to live in their own homeland, he continued. The writer said Mr. Netanyahu is waging an undeclared war on the Arabs, in general, and the Palestinians, in particular, and therefore the Arabs have no alternative but to respond in kind.

A WRITER for Al Dustour daily said Israel is not reciprocating Jordan's zeal for normalisation of bilateral relations and its leaders are clearly showing, by deed rather than word, that the peace process is dead. Oreib Rintawi said that the recent crisis between the two sides is the result of Israel's disregard of the provisions of the 1994 peace treaty, especially with regard to Jordan's share of water supplies. Since the Bakoura incident, Jordan has exerted all efforts to try to improve relations, drawing criticism for such move from different sources, but the Israelis do not seem to be concerned at all, he said. Now that the Israelis have displayed their total disregard for Jordan's rights and views, the Kingdom has no alternative but to revert to coordinating its stand with those of the other Arab states, said the writer. Most importantly, he added, Jordan is called on to give further backing to the Palestinians, to help them regain their rights and their homeland. Jordan, he added, has extended its hand of peace to Israel, but the result was that the Jewish state is showing only hostility towards the Kingdom and returning Jordan's gestures of peace with arrogant attitudes and responding to peaceful initiatives with total enmity.

Jordanian Perspective

Limited oil deal is not enough for Iraqis' need for food and medicine

By Dr. Musa Keilani

THE EXPECTED Iraqi bid for a doubling of the value of its oil-for-food agreement with the United Nations has already drawn rejection from those with vested interest in the oil industry who fear a sharp plunge in the international crude prices. As such, it seems likely that the Iraqi request would be rejected when put up for formal discussions at the U.N. Security Council.

We have already seen that the amount of food and medicine reaching the people of Iraq from the proceeds of the present agreement — worth \$2 billion in six months — has made little difference in terms of meeting their actual needs. International experts estimate that each Iraqi citizen who lives in areas controlled by the central government would get something like 30 cents worth of food and medicine per day under the present arrangement, while those in the northern Kurdish areas get 50 cents worth. Very little indeed in both cases.

As such, the Iraqi bid to increase the volume of the oil-for-food agreement should be seriously considered by the

U.N. Security Council rather than rejected outright on the pretext that it is another Iraqi political ploy.

It is criminal for anyone today to prolong the sanctions which are hurting the 20 million Iraqis, rather than the regime. But it is highly unlikely that, apart from loud noises and calls, anything concrete will be done towards lifting the sanctions as long as the present regime remains in power in Iraq. That leaves the Iraqis with the only option of the limited oil deal to meet their needs of food and medicine.

The recent visit of the U.N. coordinator, Yasushi Akashi, to Iraq, including the northern parts of the country, should have produced a report to the U.N. reflecting the actual situation and the need for quicker approval of the pending food contracts related to the oil deal. We do not know yet whether this has been done, but it goes without saying that such a report is the least someone like Mr. Akashi could prepare and submit to the Security Council.

At the other end of the equation is the whisper that we

hear in the international oil market, that allowing Iraq even to renew the six-monthly \$2 billion deal would lead to destabilising oil prices and deprive the petro-dollar earners of revenue.

May we remind those with vested interests that Iraq used to export three million barrels of oil per day before the Gulf crisis and international prices were in the region of \$16 to \$18 per barrel. Today, prices stand at around \$23, and many oil producers are reaping in unexpected revenues (it is no secret that the average oil price was calculated at \$16.5 per barrel by most oil exporters for budgetary purposes in 1996, while the actual average market price was around \$18 to \$19). If anything, these governments should appreciate the reality of Iraq's eventual full-fledged return to the oil market and make room rather than try to preempt an increase in Iraq's oil-for-food deal. Preventing the Iraqi bid simply means not allowing the people of Iraq to meet one of the basic human needs — food.

'Jinnah and Denktash, fathers of their nations, were only very partially successful'

By G. H. Jansen

NICOSIA — There are many similarities between the founders of the state of Pakistan on the Indian sub-continent and the "The Turkish republic of north Cyprus (TRNC)" on this small Mediterranean island. Rauf Raif Denktash, the founder and first and present "president" of the TRNC is, not surprisingly, great admirer of the founder and first president of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Although their spheres of activity are widely separated and their countries very different in size and population, the two men are linked by the salient fact that their goals and achievements are/were very similar. They both, almost single-handedly, created new Muslim polities. Jinnah brought Pakistan into existence and Denktash the TRNC, and by the same method. By partition. By dividing the Dominion of British India and the independent Republic of Cyprus. Both these partitions produced large-scale population movements amounting to ethnic cleansing and huge civilian fatalities: three million in the vast Indian sub-continent and 1,600 in tiny Cyprus. Today, only a small

minority of Hindus remains in Pakistan and a handful of Greek Cypriots in the TRNC. Though there is a large community of Muslims still to be found in India, indeed more than in what is left of Jinnah's Pakistan, there are very few Turkish Cypriots left in the Greek Cypriot majority republic because Denktash compelled those left behind Greek Cypriot lines by the Turkish military occupation to migrate to the Turkish-held area.

There are many resemblances between the lives and careers of the two men. They were both members of a Muslim minority, though the minority within the minority to which Jinnah belonged, the small and highly heterodox Khojas, is not even regarded as Muslims by the average Indian Muslim. Denktash belongs to the Sunni majority.

Both men were born under British rule, educated in English and trained as lawyers in Britain. Both gained prominence during the period of British colonial occupation and exploited Britain's policy of divide and rule to foster communal separatism. Both employed outside assistance to effect the partition of their countries, Jinnah Britain,

Denktash Turkey.

But the political results of the two partitions were not the same. Emerging in 1947, at the end of empire under British auspices and with Indian acquiescence, Pakistan became a fully recognised member of the community of nations. The TRNC, created in 1974 by a Turkish army invasion and occupation of the northern third of Cyprus, did not. Nearly 14 years after unilaterally declaring independence, the TRNC is still opposed by the Greek Cypriots and recognised only by Ankara. To make matters worse for Denktash, the U.N. and the powers-that-be want to reverse TRNC independence and reunite this breakaway statelet with the internationally recognised Greek Cypriot republic in a bizonal, bicomunal federation slated for admission to the European Union (EU) by 2000.

Denktash's failure to achieve the sort of independent state Jinnah created in Pakistan is a source of great frustration for the Turkish Cypriot leader who has done everything possible to block Cypriot reunification and EU membership. He is determined to remain president of his little patch of Cyprus whatever the conse-

quences for his people and the island as a whole. To reunification he prefers total integration with Turkey which, along with providing protection, financially subsidises the TRNC and its administration.

To return to similarities, the two men were both secularists in outlook and politics.

But the carving out of a separate Muslim state in India, by Jinnah, had a very different motivation from that of Denktash in Cyprus. In India, Jinnah, with his powerfully evocative slogan of "Islam in danger" — however, baseless — founded his drive for Pakistan firmly on religion. In Cyprus, it was race or ethnicity rather than religion — the historic antagonism of Turk versus Greek — that was exploited by Denktash whose slogan was "Turks in danger."

Consequently, the two entities they founded are very different.

In spite of the fact that Jinnah was a secularist, Pakistan became not merely a Muslim state but an Islamic republic, though even this has become controversial because the relationship between the government and the faith, and the government and the religious establishment, has

been troubled. The military in Pakistan, the country's real rulers, like the generals in Turkey, have not yet been able to make up their minds whether to be Muslims or Islamists.

Denktash, whose state was carved out by the militantly secular Turkish generals, has no choice but to follow the mainland's secular lead. Thus, Islam has played little, if any, part in the public life of north Cyprus. This has been at some cost to Denktash and his breakaway entity which has not gained diplomatic recognition from any Muslim government beyond that of Turkey. And, since Turkey has recently established a close friendship and military alliance with Israel, seen as the enemy of the Arabs and the Muslims, it is unlikely that the TRNC will ever have close relations with Muslim countries.

Both men were determined to become the paramount leaders of their own states. Both became autocratic non-democratic leaders, relying on military establishments to maintain them in power rather than on peoples' power. Both tended to dislike and distrust the media.

This correspondent attended the last press con-

ference that the Qaid-e-Azam (The great leader), Jinnah, gave before he left India for Karachi, the largest city in the country he created. Although he met with the Indian press, he made it absolutely clear that he loathed and despised us.

Similarly, Denktash tolerates journalists only as means to get his message out to the Turkish Cypriots or the world. Whenever he holds press conferences for foreign journalists, they are set-piece affairs, videotaped, edited and broadcast later on his television station. He makes a statement and then responds, however he sees fit, to questions put by the press, usually not to the point.

A final point of similarity is that neither of the two entities have settled down and prospered. In both cases, one of the major unsettling factors has been emigrants from the "other" country, "muhajirs" from India in the case of Pakistan and Anatolian settlers from mainland Turkey in the TRNC. And because of this problematic result it can be said that Jinnah and Denktash, as "fathers of their nations," were only very partially successful in achieving their ambitions — and deservedly so.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

'The Jewish state's aggressive policy is reason for deadlocked peace process'

REVIEWED BY
ELIA NASRALLAH

THE JORDANIAN newspapers tackled the Middle East question in light of Israel's practices and the fresh tour of U.S. envoy Dennis Ross, as well as the coming general elections and other domestic issues.

A writer for Al Ra'i described the Middle East peace process as dead, saying that mere talk about peace can by no means revive the process.

Sultan Hattab said that a fresh tour of the region by U.S. envoy Dennis Ross is not designed to revive the peace process but rather to throw sand in the eyes of the Arabs and to further deceive them into believing that it is an ongoing process.

The U.S. envoy realises too well that it is Israel which is ruining the peace process, yet his country is condoning the Jewish state's practices.

The writer said the peace process is dead because it has failed to stop Israel's settlement programmes, it has been exploited by the Israeli government and has helped the Israelis to perpetuate their occupation of Arab lands.

It is most unfortunate to see the U.S. humiliated and forced to condone Israel's practices and illegal measures, in defiance of the requirements of the peace process and the international law, said Al Dustour in an

editorial.

The paper said that the U.S., which is totally biased towards Israel, is encouraging the Jewish state to pursue its violations of all peace agreements with the Arabs to an extent that prompts one to wonder if it is not Washington behind the Israeli government's actions.

The paper said the U.S. mediation efforts leave the Arabs, in general, and the Palestinians, in particular, suspicious simply because the U.S. is witnessing the continued violations and doing nothing to deal with the situation.

Al Ra'i daily called on the U.S. administration to adopt an ethical stand vis-à-vis the Middle East and to behave as a neutral broker if it wants the peace process to succeed.

The daily said in an editorial that the U.S. administration, which is monitoring the situation in this region, no doubt realises that Israel is escalating tension with Syria and beating the drums of war with Damascus, and yet keeps silent about it.

Not only is the U.S. administration showing impotence in reviving the peace process on the Israeli-Syrian track, Washington is also failing to persuade Israel to give up provocations against Syria which is rightly demanding the return of the occupied Syrian heights in exchange of peace, in accordance with U.N. resolutions and based on

the principles of the Madrid conference.

Oreib Rintawi, a columnist in Al Dustour, said that Dennis Ross is bound to meet with failure in his current shuttle tour due to Israel's intransigence and not because the Palestinians refrain from resuming the peace negotiations with the Likud government.

The writer said that Mr. Ross is here to peddle the Israeli ideas and not to help the two sides reach an agreement based on justice.

As long as the Israelis continue their drive to build settlements on Arab lands, the Palestinians can by no means hold negotiations with them and as long as the Jewish state is pursuing its present aggressive policy, no Arab party can ever revive the peace talks with Tel Aviv, stressed the writer.

He said that Mr. Ross and the U.S. administration realise too well the importance of the Holy City of Jerusalem to the Muslims and Arabs, but they continue to turn a blind eye to Israel's actions.

A writer for Al Ra'i tackled the idea of observers monitoring the coming general elections, as has been advocated by opposition groups, and said that instead of employing foreign observers, Jordan can appoint local and neutral parties for the job.

Mahmoud Rimawi suggested the creation of a Jordanian

society that would direct its attention to the general elections, copying the example of Lebanon, Yemen and Egypt.

He said that such a society can, in addition to monitoring the elections, encourage people to vote, help develop a new elections law and contribute through their activities to the democratic process in Jordan.

Such a society, he said, will help promote awareness, among members of the public, to the need of supporting the democratic process while remaining neutral, with no political affiliation.

A writer for Al Dustour supported the idea of women being elected to Parliament and said that Jordanian women, who have entered almost every field and succeeded in the political, economic and social domains, should vote and run for the coming elections.

Mohammad Daoud said, however, that the quota system assigning certain seats for women in Parliament should be rejected because women can run on the strength of their own capabilities and should not wait for the government to assign a quota limiting their number in the house of representatives.

The writer said that since the door is open for all women to participate freely in the general elections, there should not be any quota or limitation to their participation.

LETTERS

Developing creativity

To the Editor:

I WOULD like to make a few remarks regarding the interdependence of education and the development of industry. Economically, a country advances through its mineral and human resources. This has been evident in the progress of the industries of Far Eastern countries since World War II, which could be attributed to their being able to relate value to cost, as opposed to just thinking in terms of money.

Value analysis by accountancy methods is the first stage of achieving progress: value engineering, using brain storming, think tanks, invention and design, the second; and third, all comes under the umbrella of overall value management to ensure added value to an industry's product or service.

Developing creative thought is essential in the teaching process; instead, very often, it is replaced by memorisation of school texts that is the "key to good grades" at examination. This is the easy way out for the teacher who would have to work harder, in a continuous assessment system, when using a number of projects demanding creative effort.

When examinations take place education stops. The weakness could show up, for example, in televised panels, where some participants hardly open their mouths to speak, thinking most likely they have nothing of value to impart. This is not the case; everybody has their own individual viewpoint which must be expressed no matter how learned, successful or confident other speakers may be, if only to achieve a balance of understanding.

An "Open University" for the third age does not need buildings; all it wants is creative ability and effort on the part of individuals. It could help enormously in the economic development of Jordan.

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The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Street children — 'so long as social democracy remains but a faint glimmer, nothing will change'

By Sophie Boukhari

STREET CHILDREN have no place in the world of adults. Beaten, kicked out of their homes, unjustly imprisoned, they are even killed off like vermin in certain cities like Sao Paulo. And schools, which are either incapable or simply not interested in responding to their specific needs, represent just another defeat for these kids.

Today only non-governmental organisations have any success in providing these children with the kind of comprehensive care they need to relearn to be part of society. In Mexico, the Jucon Foundation is working to reintroduce them into the formal education system, while in Senegal, an unusual Koranic school is using whatever means available to offer them a trade. But all projects of this kind are doomed to fail without the support of qualified and competent educators, sorely lacking in cities like Bucharest, or unless help is given to the children's families who can be difficult to reach, as in Ho Chi Minh City. Then there are the police, who run into these kids on a daily basis and, provided they receive the special training required and are subjected to necessary controls, can provide real help rather than harm.

"It is not only because they are homeless that they end up in the streets," explains Father Patrick Giros, founder of the French association "Aux captifs la liberation" (Liberation for captives). "It is because they have been rejected in a thousand and one ways."

Street children have accumulated a series of failures. The first almost always involves the family. Neglected, beaten, raped, these children substitute street violence for that of their parents. Forced to earn money, they end up leaving "service station families" where they no longer belong, and failure in school inevitable follows.

Always more numerous

They are thus millions living at the frontiers of a society which has become inaccessible. How many exactly? Always more numerous, insist social workers.

The figures, however, do not mean very much. All depends on how you define "street child," a term which covers different realities: Those who work in the street and go home periodically (the most numerous), those who live in the streets 24 hours a day, and runaways.

According to UNICEF, they total over 100 million and almost half of them are in Latin America. "But when I am asked where the problem is most severe, I am tempted to say that it is not in places where they are the most numerous, but rather where no one's talking about them," warns Stephane Tessier, the programme coordinator at the International Centre for Childhood and the Family.

"Today, all of the world's biggest cities — in the developing countries, those in transition and those in the industrialised nations — function by excluding children." In the latter, they are less visible because they are rapidly placed in homes or specialised institutions. But the mesh of these "safety nets" stretches under the weight of current neo-liberal policies. A Council of Europe study concluded that "the phenomenon is a major problem in many European countries," although it is often "poorly recognised,"

"badly understood" and "denied." In the United States, street children number about 750,000, according to sociologist Irving Epstein.

The school, which dispatches them into low-grade classes or excludes them completely, is of no help. "Rather than directly acknowledge the power of the culture of the street and the skills that one must learn in order to survive within that culture (respect of temporality, mistrust of authority and elimination of private and public entitlement to space), the formal education response is one of encouraging homeless children to blend into the existing school system without structurally adapting the system to their specific needs," writes Epstein in a recent article in the magazine Comparative Education.

He contends that only NGOs and charitable organisations close to the church can, for the moment, help in the area of education. Yet their efforts are often seen as marginal by governments in developing countries. "What makes the case of homeless children and youth unique or worthy of special attention?" he asks. "The answer lies in the distinctive culture of street life, whose values, while internally consistent, are entirely anti-ethical to those practised in schools."

The same everywhere

As specific as it is, this culture is no less standardised and global: identical from one end of the planet to another. "In cities of over one million inhabitants, the organisation of public space is the same everywhere, with traditional cultural landmarks strictly limited to family and school ties," says Tessier. "We find the same consumer and market ideology. You can even watch the same soaps and sitcoms on the TV screens in shop display windows."

And there are many other points in common. Street children live in gangs and need money to survive. They sell what they have: their working power, their docility, their penal immunity and their bodies. "Studies reveal that they earn the equivalent of about two minimum wages each month. But they have no possibility of saving any money because they spend it all rapidly or it is stolen from them."

The "careers" of street children, from Bogota to Kinshasa, from Manila to Los Angeles, are thus very similar. When they are small, they are used by the bigger children for the jobs out front: as look-outs, messengers, to carry drugs, etc. After that they must become gang leaders to keep clear of the police, the mafia, rival gangs and the like.

Many are ravaged by drugs by the age of 15 and it is estimated that 80 per cent to 90 per cent of children who live in the streets have taken drugs at one time or another. They sniff glue, solvents of all kinds, or carbon monoxide, using a plastic bag attached to automobile exhaust pipes. Those with the most money, who work regularly, buy themselves a bit of crack. "They'll tell you that they take drugs to forget their miseries and that, in any case, they're going to die soon."

It is this same incapacity to project themselves into the future, this "strongly identifying" valorisation of the notion of danger, or risk taking, which, together with the demands of "clients", cause them to refuse condoms and makes them particularly

vulnerable to AIDS. Nervous, unstable, totally self-centred, accustomed to putting themselves down, lost in a moral and affective desert, they owe their survival, in the final analysis, to that which helps push them further and farther away from non-violent "negotiated society."

Does all this mean that they are irretrievable? The efforts undertaken by thousands of associations and NGOs in poor urban areas prove that much can be done, provided that they are given the means to carry out the job at hand.

The first condition is to train mediators who recognise these children as fully-fledged citizens and are familiar with their universe. These "street educators" know how to

decipher these kids' behaviour, communicate with them and orient them towards the appropriate social services.

The police also have a role to play. "In many countries, when everyone has deserted 'high-risk' zones, the police find themselves on the front-line," says Tessier. "Of course we must denounce murder and torture of which a small minority is guilty, but it is also very important for the future to avoid constantly associating police with these executions. We must teach them to approach kids without entering into the spiral of provocation. When the police lose their legitimacy, a vacuum is created and who occupies it? Religious extremists and the mafia, who arrive with a 'package' of clear-

cut values and wads of money."

Like street educators, the police must know how to orient children towards structures capable of convincing them that they still have a place in society.

From there on, a long apprenticeship can begin. This requires a lot of will-power on the part of the children and a lot of individual follow-up, perseverance, energy and considerable personal commitment on the part of educators to teach children to play again, to know how to behave or speak correctly, to respect others, they use practical disciplines, usually including an introduction to business or a trade, and to all of the activities based on creativity: theatre, pantomime, dance, design, photo, video, etc.

The hardest hit need psychotherapy, and the poor, that is to say, all of them, need material help to compensate for a drop in their earnings since they will be working less or not at all in the street.

This method has all the more chance of success if it involves families, who can often be identified. Experience proves that the degree of family cooperation conditions almost everything else, beginning with reinsertion into the classic education system, or professional training.

Their worst enemy

"Educational concerns must focus both upon what happens outside the school, for example street violence, murder, etc., ...as well as what type of environment is being pro-

vided within the school," insists Irving Epstein. These efforts must also be accompanied by an attempt to sensitise public opinion, which generally oscillates between indifference and hostility towards street children. "We must not forget that the population is often their worst enemy," says Tessier. In some countries, where the child is looked upon as a small sub-adult — easily malleable and available for whatever needs to be done — the entire ancestral social system must be reformed in depth.

In Brazil, an unprecedented campaign to mobilise the media and voluntary organisations resulted in a small revolution: In a country where businessmen pay death squads to shoot them

down, street children thus found themselves at the heart of the political debate. In June 1990, the new Statute of the Child and the Adolescent replaced the Code of Minors, utilised under the dictatorship as an instrument of repression. At the same time "tutelary councils" have been set up to monitor application of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in all municipalities. This is a first important step but one which, in Tessier's opinion, is still "very abstract." As elsewhere, nothing will really change, he concludes, so long as "these children are rejected on all fronts," so long as "social democracy remains but a faint glimmer."

UNESCO - Focus



Learning to work with their hands can help put children who have had difficulties learning back on the education track (Photo G. Cerallin, Ecole Sans Frontieres)

Arab states reel under debt despite huge overseas assets

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are reeling under heavy debt although they are among the biggest investors in the world, with overseas assets of at least \$800 billion, a Gulf bank study said Thursday.

At the end of 1996, the debt of the Arab League's 22 members totalled around \$200 billion, nearly 127 per cent of their exports and 34 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP), said the study by Henry Azzam, chief economist at the Saudi National Commercial Bank.

Mr. Azzam, writing in the United Arab Emirates daily Al Khaleej, said the accumulation of external debts was due to financing of persistent deficits in the region's budgets and current accounts. He put the budget deficit at \$21.4 billion and the current account gap at \$17.8 billion in 1995.

"Financing of those deficits has resulted in the accumulation of the foreign debt of Arab countries," Mr. Azzam said.

He cited what he called conservative estimates as showing the League's investments abroad stood at more than \$800 billion, making the Arab countries the "biggest investors compared to their GDP."

Mr. Azzam gave no figures for the region's debt in previous years but according to the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), it stood at \$155.6 billion in 1994. The figure does not include military debts, especially those of Iraq.

The AMF report showed Egypt, the most populous

Arab state, remained the biggest debtor in the region, with a foreign debt of \$33.3 billion.

Algeria owed \$29.9 billion while debts stood at \$22.5 billion in Morocco, \$20.5 billion in Syria and \$17.7 billion in Sudan.

Mr. Azzam said the external debt was negligible in the oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states but added some of them suffered from internal debts which are hampering their efforts to control spending.

"The internal debt in some GCC states is steadily growing and the annual bill of servicing that debt has become one of the main factors that are obstructing efforts to control the rise in current expenditure," he said.

He was apparently referring to Saudi Arabia, which has repaid its external debts but is still saddled with internal debts covering arrears to local contractors and farmers and bonds it issues to shore up its budget deficit.

"The period of the 1980s was the lost decade for Arab economies," Mr. Azzam said in his study on economic problems in the region.

"The GDP stood at \$440 billion in 1980 and remained at \$450 billion in 1990 before rising to \$528 billion in 1995. With an annual population growth of around 2.6 per cent, the Arab per capita income declined by nearly 36 per cent to \$2,090 from \$3,260 during that period," he concluded.

Qatar non-oil exports rise

DOHA (R) — Qatar's non-oil exports rose 11.5 per cent to 2.21 billion riyals (\$607.1 million) in 1996 from 1.98 billion in 1995, figures released by the customs department showed.

Steel, fertilisers and petrochemical products were the main components of non-oil exports which Qatar is seeking to increase through the utilisation of its mammoth reserves in the North Field — the largest single concentration of natural gas in the world.

Qatar, a member of the 11-member Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Coun-

tries (OPEC), relies on oil exports as a main source of government revenue.

Customs figures showed Qatar's imports also rose 8.5 per cent to 14.49 billion riyal from 13.35 billion in 1995.

The United States topped the list of major exporters to Qatar for the first time since the early 1980s with total exports, mainly cars, machinery and consumer goods amounting to 2.45 billion riyals. Japan came second with 1.88 billion riyals.

The United Arab Emirates was the major Gulf exporter to Qatar in 1996 sending goods worth about one billion riyals.

Egypt to be granted \$2.5b aid in 1997-98

PARIS (AFP) — Egypt is to receive \$2.5 billion in aid pledged by donors meeting in Paris for the year 1997-98 to pay for reforms, the World Bank has said.

Of the total aid, \$1.5 billion would be granted as donations, the countries and international institutions taking part in the consultative group on Egypt decided.

The rest will take the form of loans at low rates of interest.

Egypt was also praised for its economic reforms which the donor group's members said had created a "new environment very favourable for domestic and foreign private investment."

However, the donors also tempered their enthusiasm by stating that a "rapid reduction and the eventual elimination of poverty must be one of the top priorities" of the government.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian parliament has adopted draft legislation facilitating investment in Egypt as part of a nationwide privatisation drive.

The draft law, which

must be ratified by President Hosni Mubarak, calls for the dissolution of a body in charge of investments as well as guarantees and tax exemptions to attract foreign investors to Egypt.

It also scraps bureaucratic red tape which was slowing down imports and exports and allows foreigners to buy and sell land for the purpose of construction.

In March, Agriculture Minister Yousef Wali said the bill "bans all threats to private enterprise: No seizures, no nationalisation and no sequestration."

The government of Prime Minister Kamal Al Ganzuri has made boosting investment a priority since coming to power in January 1996 and has vowed to remove all obstacles to that goal.

The International Monetary Fund expects foreign investment in Egypt to triple this year after declining for the three previous years and to reach \$2.1 billion in 1997 from \$650 million last year.

IMF warns markets need information ahead of transition to euro

WASHINGTON (AFP) — European currencies could be hit by turbulence next year unless markets are briefed in advance about the rates of conversion that will be applied when the euro comes into being at the beginning of 1999, a senior monetary official has warned.

"The risk of speculation is certainly not negligible" during the interim period between the final choice, in the spring of next year, of European Union (EU) countries eligible for participation, and the actual start-up of the single currency, he said.

Jacques Artus, deputy director for Europe of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), told correspondents, "you cannot let the markets without any information" about the way in which the conversion rates will be set for the

participating currencies. During the interim period, he said, the exchange rates of the countries involved would no longer depend on the economic fundamentals on which rates are normally based, including such indicators as inflation or their monetary policy stance.

A failure to closely coordinate the economic and monetary policies of the participating countries would be "unthinkable," he added.

Mr. Artus said the member countries of the European Monetary Union (EMU) would have to make it clear to markets, as soon as the membership has been established, how and through what technical approach they would decide at what level the rates of participating currencies would be locked.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.5990	0.6170	1.4366	121.92	1.3533	1682.40	1.9123	5.7385
DE Mark	0.5986	-	0.3627	0.8455	71.76	0.6139	968.30	1.1247	3.7395
GB Sterling	1.6207	2.7555	-	2.2267	197.48	2.2419	2724.30	3.0966	9.2918
CH Franc	0.6961	1.1622	0.4291	-	84.83	0.9631	1169.82	132.98	3.9009
JP Yen	0.0082	1.3830	0.5056	1.1775	-	1.1341	13.80	156.89	4.7028
CA Dollar	0.7229	1.2336	0.4461	1.0442	1.13	-	1220.21	1.3884	4.1619
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0003	0.3963	0.0853	1362.17	0.8218	-	11.35	3.4066
NL Guilder	0.5229	88.88	0.3226	75.17	63.75	0.7236	880.21	-	3.0003
FR Franc	0.1743	0.2862	0.1075	25.0283	21.23	0.2412	33.31	33.3100	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LEB	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7502	0.3770	3.6401	0.3030	3.6715	1.638.50	3.3895
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2989	0.5324	5.1414	0.4280	5.1857	2173.02	4.7874
GB Sterling	0.2667	0.1688	-	0.1005	0.97	0.8008	0.98	410.24	0.9038
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.6781	-	0.9463	-	0.8038	9.74	4081.23	8.9913
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0302	1.0302	-	0.0832	1.01	422.65	0.9311
Kuwait Dinar	3.3003	2.3368	12.3768	1.2441	12.01	-	12.12	5077.56	0.9311
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.1928	1.0214	1.0207	0.9914	0.0825	-	419.04	0.9232
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4802	2.4376	0.2450	2.3680	0.1969	2.3884	-	2.2031
Egyptian	0.2850	0.2089	1.1064	0.1112	1.0740	0.0894	1.0332	453.91	-

Energy		Mid-East Currencies	
Brent	18.75	SA Riyal	0.2667
WTX	20.30	AE Dirham	0.2724
Bony	18.75	KW Dinar	3.3003
Dubai	18.20	BH Dinar	0.3770
UL Gas	192.00	CY Pound	1.9547

Metal Prices		Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)	
Gold (oz's)	344.8	Period	1-3
Silver (oz's)	4.84	Cncy	Month
Platinum (oz's)	382.75	USD	5.58
AL (3 Months)	1665	GBP	6.06
CU (3 Months)	2379	JPY	0.83
Zinc (3 Months)	0	DEM	2.88
Lead (3 Months)	625.5	FRF	3.24
NI (3 Months)	7785	CHF	1.50

Main Equity Indices		JOD Cross Rates	
Source	Index	Currency	Buy
New York	DOW JONES	US Dollar	0.708
New York	S&P 500	GB Sterling	1.1573
London	FT-SE 100	DE Mark	0.4086
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	CH Franc	0.4833
Paris	CAC 40	FR Franc	0.1215
Frankfurt	DAX	JP Yen	0.0625

Energy		JOD Cross Rates	
Commodity	Last	Currency	Buy
Coffee (c/lbs)	241	US Dollar	0.708
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1439	GB Sterling	1.1573
Sugar (\$/ton)	317	DE Mark	0.4086
Wheat (\$/ton)	175	CH Franc	0.4833
Soya (c/lbs)	24.21	FR Franc	0.1215
Tea (\$/kg)	157	JP Yen	0.0625
Barley (\$/bush)	0	NL Guilder	0.3643
Rice (\$/ton)	480	IT Lira	0.4139

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Wound covers

6 Fills with reverence

10 Army off.

14 Knock for —

15 Hurrah!

16 Cosby kid

17 STOCKS

20 Diner

21 Takes over

22 Nav. Acad. grad

23 Flying start

24 LOCKS

32 Basalt, before

33 Prosperity

34 Means of ID?

35 Mounted

36 1976 Super

37 Bowl MVP

38 East European

39 Mail de

40 Speaker's spot

41 Trident part

42 ROCKS

47 Pangolin food

48 Tough tree

49 Texas river

52 Sweet roll

56 BLOCKS

59 Lab gel

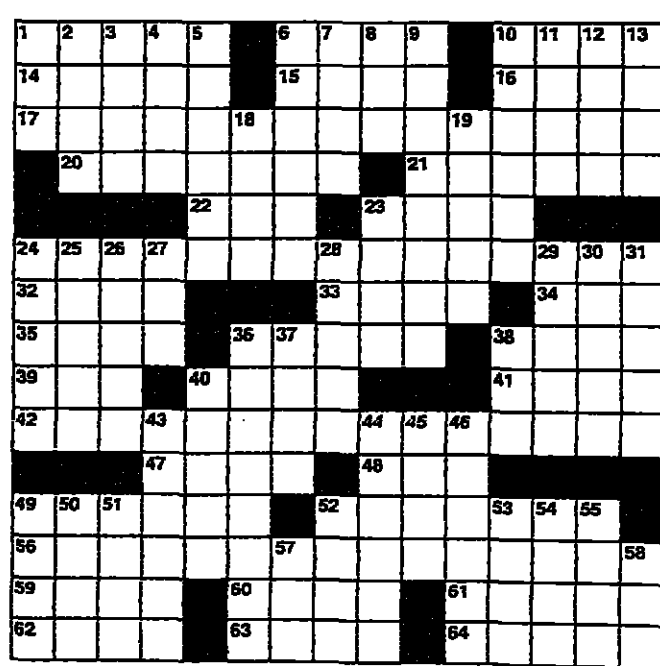
60 Apprehend

61 Outcast

62 Stance

63 Saw

64 Parented ponies



by Richard Thomas

BEADS	SLAB	TERM
ALTYR	OONA	OLED
BLOW	ININ	THEWIND
ESPIY	ARE	SHADE
ELSE	ALSO	
MYCHERIE	AMOUR	
CRIDE	UREY	TRAI
HAND	CAPER	CHIT
OIRE	SORE	THESE
PAIR	TIME	LOVER
HENS	EVAN	
ADORE	TAU	IVAN
FORNCE	INMY	LIFE
ALAN	RENY	ALERT
RENE	OEO	PESOS

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50 Jason's vessel

51 Partiality

52 French cheese

53 211

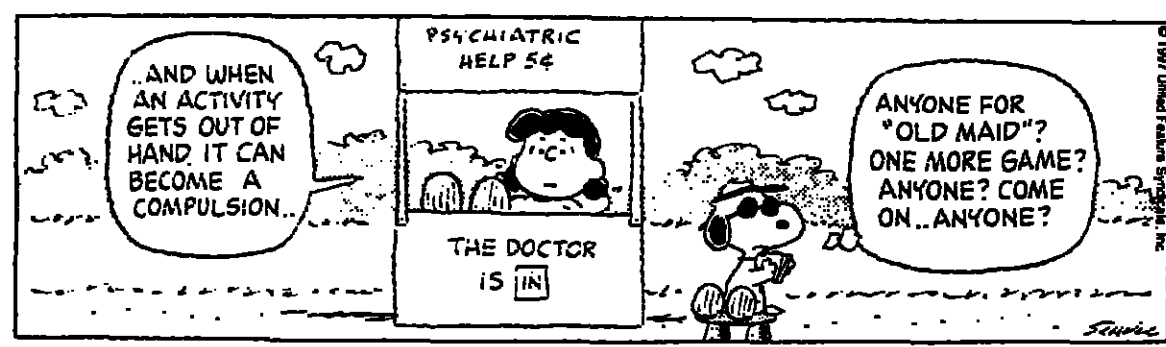
54 Future owner

55 Magazine title

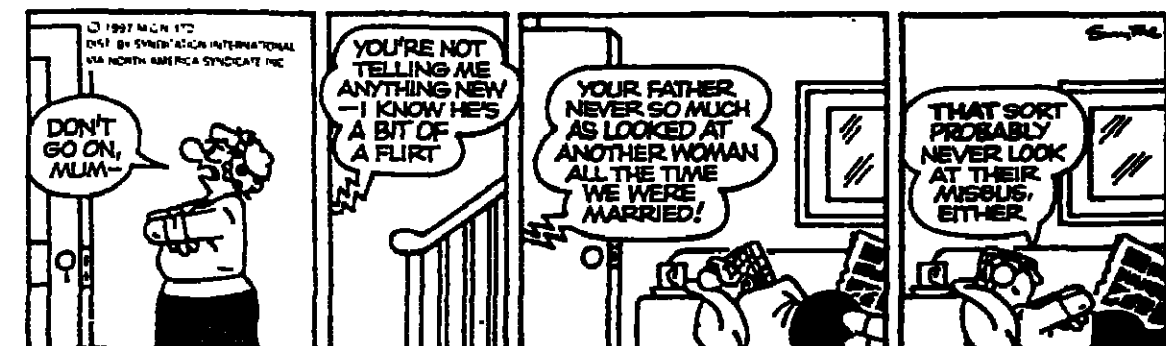
57 Recipe

58 — Zeppelin

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, MAY 10, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be sure you do nothing which will alienate others today, especially in the business world. Take the time later this evening to talk to your loved ones and find out if there is anything which bothers them and if you can help.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If conditions at career activities are not pleasant today, keep poised and avoid a big disagreement. Be sure that you drive while on the highway with utmost care this evening and you can avoid any difficulties.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You had planned a happy carefree day today. However, take care of your responsibilities, whether they be personal or business. You should not disagree with your mate later this evening or harmony won't exist there.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Several difficulties have to be straightened out early today before you can establish harmony at home. Entertain guests later this evening in your home and make them feel comfortable by being the perfect host or hostess.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You may be tempted to tell off a fellow associate today who is not living up to your expectations, however, hold your tongue or you could say something which you would later regret. Enjoy a hobby with a good friend.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You should not listen to a usually trusted advisor who could get you in some serious difficulties. Use your common sense, later this evening, and don't overspend otherwise you could be short of funds when it truly counts.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get together for a night on the town later this evening with a group of congenial friends, however, get all your labouring finished before you go out. Later this evening will be good for meeting with knowledgeable people.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Something which has been upsetting you can be cleared up easily today. Avoid a disagreement with your mate, and have a wonderful evening together. This is the time to be with fellow associates who can assist you on a project.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A close friend of yours has been acting strangely. Rather than disagreeing about this later this evening, see what the difficulty is and try to be of assistance, thereby you can receive a great deal of praise at home.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This morning is a good time to handle your shopping and errands, as you could find some real bargains. Get out on the town later this evening with close friends who are anxious to relax before the days ahead.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Don't make any radical changes in your immediate environment today. This would be a good evening to make some friends who have the same ideas for success in the days ahead and you will get noticed.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You should not follow your hunches today, as your judgement is really not up to par. Don't become involved in the difficulties of a close friend, later this evening thereby you can discover how to accomplish your goals.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine.

EU to grant Jordan \$66m

AMMAN (Petra) — Yves Gazzo, head of the delegation of the European Commission in Jordan, Friday said that the EU will grant Jordan a \$66 million to help Jordan carry out its economic reform programme.

In an interview with Jordan News Agency, Petra, on the occasion of the European Day, Mr. Gazzo said: "The EU is committed to support Jordan politically and economically in appreciation of its distinguished supportive role for the peace process and for its economic reform programme as well."

Mr. Gazzo added that \$50 million will be allocated for economic reform programme, following a \$75

million grant given to Jordan last October.

The head of the European delegation said: "The EU will grant Jordan seven million European Currency Units to finance Jordanian exports through extending consultations to industrialists in order to improve their products."

Mr. Gazzo said the EU aid to the Kingdom would take another form through giving direct assistance to Jordanian institutions.

"The EU will offer 573,000 European Currency Units (ECU) to the Kingdom in order to strengthen the level of democracy and human rights," he said stressing that "the EU will this year allocate four million Euro-

pean Currency Units to improve education levels."

He added that the EU will next July help organise displays in cooperation with the Jordan Export Development Corporation.

"We will allocate 500,000 ECUs for major shows next July at which more than 200 European and 150 Jordanian companies will be taking part," said Mr. Gazzo.

"The EU will grant 120,000 ECUs to small projects in order to alleviate unemployment rate and will establish a modern bakery at a cost of 55,000 ECUs this year in addition to other small income generating projects," Mr. Gazzo concluded.

AFM modifies calculation of price earning ratio

By Francesca Ciriaci
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In an effort to attract foreign investment and comply with methods adopted by most international stock exchanges, the Amman Financial Market (AFM) reviewed its method of calculating its price earning (p/e) ratio.

According to the newly revised method, applied as of May 1st, only the companies included in the price index sample are considered in the calculation of the p/e ratio, whereas, according to the old method, all companies listed in the market were included in the calculation.

The p/e ratio registered 14.5 by the end of April, but, according to the newly revised calculation, the p/e for the same period goes down to 13, an AFM statement asserted.

The difference has been

attributed to losses of companies outside the price index sample, which were apparently negatively affecting the p/e ratio of the market as a whole.

Nonetheless, brokers at the AFM do not consider the move as a decisive step in attracting foreign investments and continue to criticise the government for what they deem "restrictive measures against foreign capital."

"The biggest problem remains, and that is the foreign investment law which limits foreign ownership to 50 per cent," one broker lamented.

"Foreign investors are keen to buy, but we have to turn their offers down because many companies in which they are interested have already reached the ceiling of 50 per cent foreign ownership," the same source said.

According to the 1996 Shareholding Companies

Guide published by the AFM, there are 18 banks and financial companies, 17 insurance companies, 51 services companies, and 87 industrial companies, for a total of 173 shareholding companies in Jordan.

"However, the AFM will continue to calculate and publish a p/e ratio for each individually listed company on a daily basis," an AFM statement said, adding that "this implies dividing the market price at closing by the net profits after tax for each company."

This ratio will not be affected by the newly revised method of calculating the p/e.

The p/e ratio at the AFM appears relatively low when compared to other stock exchanges in the region.

According to AFM figures, Egypt has a p/e ratio of 16.5, Turkey 15.6, and Morocco 19.4.

Daewoo goes global with new models, stronger research team

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's Daewoo Motors Co. has said it would beef up its presence in the world market with three new passenger car models this year and more in the future to help it overcome domestic blues.

"Daewoo's strengthening globalisation drive is in line with a worsening slump in the local market," said a Daewoo spokesman, Kim Hyung-Soo.

The country's third largest auto maker said in a statement that by 2000 Daewoo would double its research team, which now numbers 5,400 people worldwide, to better cope with rapid changes in consumer demand.

The company runs auto design and technology centres in Britain and Germany. "Starting in western Europe, three new models would penetrate into 60 countries worldwide from June," the spokesman said.

The three new entrants into the global market are Leganza with a 2,000-CC engine, Nubira with engine

capacities of 1,800-CC and 1,500-CC and Lanos with a 1,500-CC engine.

Daewoo plans to introduce two or three new models targeting the world market every year in following years, using "global sourcing, global technology and global testing," the company said in the statement.

Company officials declined to give further details on the plans.

Daewoo Motors, a flagship of Daewoo business group, chalked up a 69 per cent rise in exports last year on the back of its strong push to expand production facilities and marketing overseas.

The company shipped 471,104 vehicles abroad last year, compared with 280,508 in 1995, with exports to eastern Europe alone jumping 242 per cent year-on-year to 193,300 in 1996.

Thanks to the brisk exports, Daewoo, unlike its stronger domestic rivals, posted an increase in net profits totalling 51.9 billion

won (\$58 million) last year, up from 10.5 billion won in 1995.

Its estimated revenue for 1996 amounted to 4.5 trillion won, up from 3.4 trillion won in the previous year, the company spokesman said.

Daewoo, which is due to lift its production capacity from the current 1.58 million units a year to two million units at home and abroad by 2000, predicted 6.8 trillion won in sales and 70 billion won in net profit for 1997.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (03/05/1997 - 07/05/1997)
WEEKLY REPORT



TRADING THE LAST 2 WEEKS		COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE PRICE	TURNOVER SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
03/05	04/05					10000/2500									
59.000	221.000	ARAB BANK	11.8	1.37	22	660	168320	253.00	255.50	254.00	255.50	+ 9.50	255.045	.015	5
1.820	1.690	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	9.3	0.00	70	85967	150309	1.69	1.80	1.68	1.79	+ .10	1.755	.205	5
4.550	4.100	CAIRO ARAB BANK	9.3	3.33	4	17960	80819	4.55	4.50	4.50	4.50	-.05	4.500	.100	3
2.920	2.840	BANK OF JORDAN	10.0	0.00	8	1500	4419	2.90	3.00	2.90	3.00	+ .10	2.944	.014	3
1.000	1.950	KID. EAST INV. BK.	62.4	0.00	8	6200	5920	.96	.96	.95	.95	-.01	.955	.062	3
2.380	2.380	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	14.3	7.65	1	700	442	2.33	2.21	2.21	2.21	-.12	2.210	.002	1
4.990	4.820	JOR. HOUSING BK.	18.5	0.00	50	376933	1794522	4.87	4.77	4.70	4.77	-.10	4.766	1.508	5
2.600	2.580	JOR. EDU. DEV. BK.	18.5	0.00	27	4865	12398	2.58	2.60	2.53	2.56	-.02	2.540	.049	5
4.820	4.800	JOR. GULF BANK	4.8	8.75	16	45500	36795	.81	.82	.80	.80	-.01	.809	.228	5
3.820	3.620	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	14.5	3.27	24	8185	28864	3.62	3.61	3.52	3.56	-.06	3.539	.056	5
1.440	1.400	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	95.4	0.00	2	450	601	1.40	1.34	1.33	1.33	-.07	1.336	.005	1
3.350	3.150	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	21.2	0.00	3	1500	1489	3.35	3.35	3.30	3.30	-.05	3.307	.005	1
1.150	1.030	BEIT-EL-JAL (BEITRA)	8	15.00	15	4550	4596	1.03	1.04	1.00	1.00	-.03	1.010	.228	4
4.990	4.740	ARAB BANKING CO.	22.7	0.00	1	10800	4700	4.74	4.70	4.70	4.70	-.04	4.700	.010	1
1.170	1.070	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	8	0.00	20	10500	13572	1.14	1.13	1.07	1.12	-.02	1.102	.305	5

BANKS	SECTOR			269	564910	2308268	INDEX NUMBER: 152770	CHANGE: +0.68%							
2.300	2.300 GENERAL ARAB INSUR.	13.2	7.58	2	280	616	2.30	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	-.10	2.200	.023	1
4.250	4.250 YERUSALIM INSUR.	11.3	4.82	1	500	2075	4.25	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	-.10	4.150	.047	1
1.400	1.400 UNIVERSAL INSUR.	9.8	0.00	1	3600	4788	1.40	1.33	1.33	1.33	1.33	-.07	1.330	.360	1
2.250	2.250 ROYAL LAND INSUR.	6.8	0.00	3	3542	8097	2.25	2.30	2.25	2.30	2.30	+.05	2.286	.443	1
2.050	2.050 ARAB LIFE INSUR.	7.2	5.41	2	350	658	2.05	1.95	1.85	1.85	1.85	-.20	1.880	.018	2

INSURANCE	SECTOR			10	8285	16254	INDEX NUMBER: 115.42	CHANGE: +1.14%							
1.700	1.660	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	8.1	5.39	134	87544	142610	1.69	1.67	1.55	1.67	-.02	1.629	.584	5
7.350	7.000	VEHICLE OWNERS FID.	7.8	4.93	3	1200	8528	7.10	7.15	7.10	7.10	-.05	7.104	.820	2
4.250	4.250	ARAB INTL. INV. FID.	11.3	4.82	1	500	2075	4.25	4.15	4.15	4.15	-.10	4.150	.047	1
2.400	2.350	SHIPPING LINES	13.7	5.51	2	1900	4484	2.40	2.36	2.36	2.36	-.04	2.360	.027	1
1.060	.960	KHAL. PORTFOLIO	-	0.00	22	9014	8867	.96	.99	.99	.99	+.01	.984	.180	5
.900	.880	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.1	6.90	1	200	174	.88	.87	.87	.87	-.01	.870	.004	1
.500	.480	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	24.8	0.00	3	900	432	.48	.48	.48	.48	-.01	.480	.026	1
7.400	7.400	ALBANA	13.0	6.50	3	200	1450	7.40	7.25	7.25	7.25	-.35	7.250	.034	1
1.220	1.170	KID. EAST INV. BK.	19.2	0.00	20	22150	26922	1.17	1.26	1.17	1.26	+.09	1.215	.420	2
3.070	3.000	ARAB INTL. INV. FID.	7.9	0.00	12	7400	22103	3.00	3.02	2.90	3.02	+.02	2.987	.073	5
.990	.960	KHAL. PORTFOLIO	-	0.00	13	8100	7863	.97	.98	.97	.97	-.01	.971	.180	5
1.700	1.640	UNIFIED CO.	7.7	6.75	13	6150	10667	1.64	1.65	1.63	1.63	-.01	1.637	.123	3
.710	.700	UNION LAND DEV.	-	0.00	1	500	350	.70	.70	.70	.70	-.01	.700	.010	1

SERVICES	SECTOR		237	145754	236094	INDEX NUMBER: 103.98	CHANGE: +1.12%								
1.050	1.000	ATMOSPHERES	-	0.00	7	3800	3903	1.05	1.05	1.00	1.05	-	1.027	.136	2
3.800	3.500	JOR. CHEM. FACT.	25.3	2.88	148	47998	180464	3.50	3.20	3.20	3.20	-.04	3.260	.079	5
3.200	3.000	JOR. PETRO. REFINERY	8.7	3.17	9	4800	14816	3.05	3.15	3.05	3.15	+.10	3.087	.011	5
5.980	5.680	ARAB POTASH CO.	13.3	3.51	5	500	2860	5.70	5.80	5.70	5.70	-	5.720	.001	3
10.250	10.100	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.0	9.55	52	3071	28730	10.19	9.68	9.20	9.31	-.88	9.355	.048	5
4.700	4.680	JORDAN TANNING	4.72	0.00	3	325	2067	4.70	4.76	4.76	4.76	-.34	4.360	.033	1
1.300	1.300	WOMEN'S INDUSTRIES	59.9	0.00	1	200	270	1.30	1.35	1.35	1.35	+.05	1.350	.020	1
2.240	1.780	INDUSTRIAL COM. AG.	-	0.00	45	11577	20249	1.78	1.83	1.70	1.83	+.05	1.749	.232	5
6.650	6.620	JOR. MONSTER KILLS	10.5	3.08	4	1100	7150	6.62	6.50	6.50	6.50	-.12	6.500	.028	2
3.800	3.650	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	9.8	5.62	78	23847	83370	3.67	3.56	3.44	3.56	-.11	3.496	.265	5
7.150	6.900	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	7.3	2.82	6	2800	19465	7.10	7.10	6.90	7.10	-.20	6.952	.112	3
2.240	2.250	JORDAN DAILY	10.77	5.56	3	407	923	2.26	2.27	2.26	2.27	+.01	2.268	.023	2
1.210	1.500	JOR. PAPER MANFCT.	17.9	5.56	2	350	505	1.53	1.45	1.44	1.44	-.09	1.443	.011	2
1.210	1.180	BATIA INDUSTRIES	-	0.00	2	500	585	1.20	1.18	1.16	1.16	-.04	1.170	.050	2
4.950	4.650	DAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	11.2	5.46	35	5498	24430	4.65	4.60	4.40	4.58	-.07	4.443	.092	5
3.420	3.300	ARAB ALUM. IND.	7.9	7.37	10	2750	9235	3.40	3.39	3.35	3.39	-.01	3.356	.046	3
.560	.490	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.8	0.00	56	58064	28988	.51	.51	.51	.51	-	.510	.178	5
1.100	1.040	ARAB PAPER CO. IND.	31.2	0.00	10	9700	9899	1.04	1.03	1.02	1.02	-.02	1.021	.277	2
1.060	1.040	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	0.00	0.00	4	1250	1343	1.05	1.10	1.05	1.10	+.05	1.074	.031	1
.610	.550	NATIONAL IND.	8.1	10.31	14	4700	2585	.55	.55	.55	.55	-	.550	.078	3
.810	.710	INTERVED. PETRO. CHEM.	-	0.00	37	19800	14163	.73	.73	.70	.73	-	.715	.495	4
.660	.660	JOR. ROCKETRY IND.	-	0.00	10	4750	2915	.66	.64	.60	.60	-.06	.614	.158	4
2.180	2.150	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	19.2	4.68	2	15614	12174	2.15	2.12	2.12	2.12	-.02	2.104	.390	2
1.300	1.250	BAL. CHEM. WIL. WAC	18.18	0.00	22	4250	11102	1.26	1.26	1.25	1.27	+.02	1.262	.085	5
.790	.660	JOR. SULPH. CHEM.	-	0.00	63	38150	26836	.70	.72	.68	.68	-.02	.702	.956	4
1.480	1.400	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	18.0	4.96	41	14500	20029	1.42	1.42	1.31	1.42	-.11	1.381	.290	4
1.520	1.410	UNIV. IND. RESOURCES	565.9	.17	23	4850	9901	1.41	1.49	1.41	1.49	+.08	1.445	.137	5
1.230	1.140	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	15.2	8.85	75	28400	32455	1.15	1.18	1.13	1.13	-.05	1.135	.355	5
1.250	1.150	REEL. CHOLIDGE	12.9	5.11	50	581	500	1.35	1.37	1.35	1.37	+.02	1.362	.007	2
.470	.470	JOR. WIL. CHEM. CO.	0.00	0.00	53	17300	14819	.87	.87	.85	.87	-	.857	.216	5
1.480	1.400	KL. -RAY KAY WEAR	135.0	0.00	7	1772	2993	1.79	1.73	1.68	1.68	-.11	1.689	.024	2
1.240	1.160	IND. TOBACCO	27.1	0.00	34	14855	17249	1.19	1.18	1.14	1.15	-.04	1.161	.149	4
.950	.890	UNION CH. & VEL.	28.8	0.00	40	33200	20900	.89	.91	.86	.91	+.02	.876	.738	5

Jazireh new champions of 1st Division basketball

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Jazireh won the country's First Division Basketball Championship title for the first time in over 30 years after beating Al Ahli 82-59 in their second round match Thursday night.

The win ended the decades-long dominance of titleholders Al Orthodoxy and all-time rivals Al Ahli over one of the country's most prestigious sports titles.

Although three more matches remain in the competition, including Orthodoxy-Jazireh and Ahli-Orthodoxy, Al Jazireh have already clinched first place even if they lose to Al Orthodoxy Sunday leaving the two former champions fighting for second and third places.

"We are delighted," a thrilled Fadi Sabbah, head coach of Al Jazireh told the Jordan Times.

"The players are undoubtedly happy about their achievement, and the fact that all their effort has paid off. However, we still have another important match and the competition is not over yet," he added.

Al Jazireh had defeated Al Ahli 85-57 in the first round and went on to beat Al Orthodoxy 62-54. They maintained their lead atop

the standings when Al Orthodoxy lost to Al Ahli 70-66 in the first round.

After coming close to the title in the past two seasons Al Jazireh appeared determined to clinch the title and their young lineup seem to have undoubtedly benefited from their participation in the Arab Clubs tournament in Tunisia last month.

The other top two teams — Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxy — are now out of contention for the title and for the first time they will be playing for runner up and third positions.

Al Orthodoxy surprisingly lost to Al Ahli 70-66 in the first round and their real form did not appear afterwards as their only second round matches were 90-32 over last-placed Hussein and 111-21 over Al Jalil who had to recruit their soccer players to play after the initial lineup boycotted two previous matches over unsettled differences with their club's board.

Now, for the first time in

years, Al Orthodoxy find themselves in third place instead of topping the overall standings.

On the other hand, and following their dismal showing against Al Jazireh in the first round, Al Ahli have handed new coach Raffi Cholukyan the reigns taking over from Ghaith Najjar, the head coach for the past two seasons, during which the team was unable to reclaim the title and have been in a slumping form ever since.

With three of Jordan's top players — Naser Bushnaq, Yousef Zaghoul and Marwan Ma'touq — off the team Cholukyan, a former head coach of the Soviet Unions' national teams, has been trying to lift the team's form and morale in trying to end Al Orthodoxy's current two-year reign or maintain an advanced standing.

Al Ahli were previously trained by Ukrainian Alexander Sacha who guided the team to a 1990 win ending Al Orthodoxy's

1976-1989 reign atop the Kingdom's basketball scene.

Al Ahli went on to win the crown in 1992, 93, 94 before Sacha left his post after apparent differences with the board.

The other teams in the competition are out of the spotlights. Al Jalil's team has disintegrated from one match to another and Al Hussein have not yet won a single match and are scheduled to play Al Jalil Sunday.

With Al Yarmouk already relegated for withdrawing at the beginning of the competition, Al Hussein are playing with no serious goal in mind and no matter what their results they will keep their place in the prestigious group for the coming season.

Al Jazireh will meet Al Orthodoxy in the other match Sunday night at 7:15 p.m. at the Sports Palace.

The competition concludes with Al Ahli-Orthodoxy match May 14.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Jazireh	7	7	-	601	346	14
Ahli	7	5	2	447	382	12
Orthodoxy	6	4	2	501	305	10
Jalil	7	1	6	308	528	8
Hussein	7	-	7	309	605	7
Yarmouk	-	-	-	-	-	-

•Relegated to 2nd Division

Stoute eyes Longchamp victory

PARIS (R) — Highly successful British trainer Michael Stoute will attempt to carry his winning streak across the channel to the French 2,000 guineas Sunday with fast improving colt Yalaletance.

Yalaletance, who beat last year's champion European juvenile Revocque in the Greenham Stakes, heads a three-pronged British assault in the group one Poule d'Essai des Poulains at Longchamp.

Stoute, regarded as one of the world's premier trainers, produced the winner of last Saturday's 2,000 guineas at Newmarket in England — Entrepreneur.

The son of a Barbados ex-policeman chief has been conquering tracks around the world, chalking up victories in the Breeders' Cup, Japan Cup and the Dubai World Cup.

Larry Bird to coach Indiana Pacers

INDIANAPOLIS (R) — Larry Bird, one of the greatest players in the history of the NBA and his hometown Indiana, has agreed to become the new coach of the Indiana Pacers after spurning a front-office job with the Boston Celtics.

The Pacers said Thursday that Bird had reached a multi-year agreement. A news conference was scheduled for Monday.

Bird, 40, replaces Larry Brown, who resigned last week and later was named coach of the Philadelphia 76ers.

Terms were not disclosed, but various reports put Bird's salary at \$4 million per year, with options ranging from entering the front office to partial ownership.

"I'm very excited about this opportunity to go back home and coach the Indiana Pacers," said Bird. "Indiana is the only team I wanted to

coach and I am excited about this new challenge and new career."

"We're very happy he made that choice," Pacers president Donnie Walsh said. "We know that he's going to be a real real good NBA coach."

Bird has never held any sort of coaching job. He was a special assistant for the Celtics since his retirement in 1992.

One of Bird's last duties was opening conversation with Rick Pitino regarding Boston's coaching vacancy. Pitino accepted the job Tuesday and said in a news conference earlier Thursday, before the Pacers' announcement, that he hoped Bird would stay with the Celtics as general manager.

Instead, the self-styled "hick from French lick" is going back home.

"I'm looking forward to

working with the players and Donnie Walsh and his staff, and I'm going to give it everything I've got, just the way I did when I was playing," Bird said. "I'm looking forward to producing the best basketball we can for the State of Indiana."

Before joining the pros, Bird starred at Indiana State, losing a national championship game in a memorable matchup with a Michigan State team led by Magic Johnson, the player with whom he will always be linked in one of the sport's historic rivalries.

Bird won three titles with the Celtics before retiring with various physical ailments.

Hawks shock Bulls, Lakers douse Jazz

CHICAGO (R) — Mookie Blaylock made 8-of-9 three-pointers and scored 26 points as the Atlanta Hawks stunned the Chicago Bulls with a 103-95 road win and evened their Eastern Conference semifinal at one game apiece.

In the Western Conference semis, the Los Angeles Lakers romped past the ice-cold Jazz 104-84 to cut Utah's lead in their best-of-seven series to two games to one.

Steve Smith scored 13 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter and Dikembe Mutombo dominated the low post with 19 points and 15 rebounds for the Hawks, who dealt the defending champion Bulls their first home playoff loss since game 6 of the 1995 Conference finals against the Orlando Magic.

"Nothing is better than this," said Mutombo.

Atlanta lost game 1 by three points but didn't let opportunity slip away this time. The Hawks built a 16-point fourth-quarter lead and easily held on to gain homecourt advantage. Game 3 is Saturday in Atlanta.

"We came here to get the split and we got the job done," said Hawks coach Lenny Wilkens.

Michael Jordan had 27 points and 16 rebounds and Scottie Pippen added 24 points for the Bulls, who finally lost a game after appearing vulnerable in each of their first four playoff games. Chicago had been 90-4 at the United Centre over the last two seasons.

"We all have to look ourselves in the mirror and come out and play better in the rest of the series," Jordan said. "This was definitely a poor performance by our team. This has been building up over the last four or so playoff games, where we just squeak by with victories."

The Bulls had problems in the frontcourt. Rebounding leader Dennis Rodman was not ejected as he was in Game 1, but fouled out with two points and five rebounds. Forward Brian Williams left in the second quarter with a strained right knee and did not return. Centre Luc Longley picked up three fouls in the first quarter.

"There's no reason why Michael Jordan has to go and get 16 rebounds, Michael has to chase Mookie around all night and that's tough," Pippen said.

"Dennis just didn't do his job tonight. We all have to do better, not just Dennis." "I'm not going to point to certain people like the frontcourt," Jordan said. "It was just a poor outing."

Blaylock fell one three-point shy of the record recently set by Phoenix guard Rex Chapman. He added nine assists, seven rebounds and three steals.

"It was a hard-fought game, but the difference tonight was that we played aggressive the whole game



Chicago Bulls' Scottie Pippen (L) dunks and then hangs from the basket in the NBA Eastern Conference semifinals playoff game in Chicago, May 8. Atlanta Hawk's Alan Henderson (C) and Tyrone Corbin can only watch (Reuters photo)



Atlanta Hawks' Dikembe Mutombo (L) drives past Chicago Bulls' Dennis Rodman in the second quarter of NBA Eastern conference semifinals playoff game in Chicago, May 8. Atlanta won the game, 103-95, to tie the series at one game apiece (Reuters photo)

through and we took good care of the basketball," Blaylock said.

Christian Laettner scored 18 points for the Hawks, who shot 52 percent (37-of-71) from the field, overcoming 14 missed free throws.

Toni Kukoc and Ron Harper scored 15 points apiece for the Bulls, who shot 41 percent (38-of-92) and were outscored 20-8 at the line.

In Inglewood, California, rookie Kobe Bryant, playing just 19 minutes, scored 16 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter to cap the Lakers' 20-point rout of the Jazz.

Nick Van Exel added 17 points and Elden Campbell 14 for the Lakers, who have not dropped three consecutive games all season and have not lost at home since April 4th.

The Lakers host game 4 on Saturday. Jeff Hornacek scored 26 points but Karl Malone had just 15 — 14 below his

playoff average — for the Jazz, who lost for the first time in the playoffs and just the second time in their last 26 games.

"I can't remember when I played this bad," Malone said. "I didn't change anything. I just didn't make the shots. As an athlete, you know these kind of games happen now and then, I just wish it was during the regular season."

Utah shot just 29 percent (23-of-80) from the field after entering the game averaging 50.6 percent in the playoffs. The Jazz shot just 6-of-44 (14 percent) in the first half.

"They just annihilated us," Utah coach Jerry Sloan said. "They came out and played and we had no way of dealing with it. We were totally out of sync. They just took us out of everything we do. They had all the energy and we couldn't deal with it."

"It was a good game all around, offensively and defensively," Los Angeles

coach Del Harris said. "I'm happy with the outcome and everyone's performance. This was a game we had to win. We ended up playing better than I thought we would."

Los Angeles all-star centre Shaquille O'Neal was ejected with 7:36 left in the fourth quarter after receiving a double technical foul. "I'm not making any comments about the ejection," O'Neal said. "The main thing to focus on is that we won the game."

Los Angeles never trailed, as the Jazz were just 2-of-22 from the field in the first quarter.

The Lakers shot 49 percent (35-for-72) and held a 47-37 rebounding advantage.

Utah guard John Stockton was 0-for-6 from the field and finished with five points.

The game featured 66 fouls — 33 on each team. The Lakers committed two flagrant fouls.

Miami Heat's Pat Riley wins coach of the Year Award

NEW YORK (R) — Pat Riley of the Miami Heat on Thursday was named 1996-97 NBA Coach of the Year, becoming the first coach in league history to win the award with three different teams.

In his second season as Miami's head coach, Riley guided the Heat to a franchise-best 61-21 record — an improvement of 19 victories over the previous season — and the club's First Division title.

The Heat posted winning records for six consecutive months this season, including franchise-best 11-3 records in December and March on the way to finishing first in the Atlantic Division.

Riley won his first coach of the year award with the Los Angeles Lakers in 1990 after not getting the honour despite guiding the team to four NBA championships in the 1980s.

He earned his second coach of the year nod with the New York Knicks in 1993.

Riley joins Don Nelson as the only coaches in NBA history to receive the honour three times. Nelson won

twice with the Milwaukee Bucks (1983, 1985) and once with the Golden State Warriors (1992).

Riley received 69 out of a possible 115 votes in balloting by a panel of sports writers and broadcasters, easily beating out Charlotte's Dave Cowen for the award.

Cowen finished second in the balloting with 22 votes, with Utah's Jerry Sloan third with 13 votes. Eight coaches received at least one vote, the NBA announced.

"When you win, people are going to recognise that and I'm flattered," Riley said at a news conference in Miami Thursday.

"It's been a lot of fun watching this team grow."

"This has been a real special team for me because of some young players that have developed and some veteran players that have really sort of come back and played well, so it's a great experience."

Eastern Conference semifinals

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(best-of-seven series tied 1-1)

Western Conference semifinals

LA Lakers 104 Utah 84
(Utah leads best-of-seven series 2-1)

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Seles crashes out of Italian Open

ROME (R) — France's Mary Pierce beat Monica Seles for the first time in her career on Thursday to send the top-seeded American out of the Italian Open tennis tournament.

In a remarkable match played in a light drizzle under floodlights at the clay court Foro Italico, Pierce deservedly won 7-6, 7-6 to reach the quarter-finals after fighting back in each tiebreak to 8-6 from 6-3 down.

The Frenchwoman never let World No. 3 Seles take the upper hand and played some breathtaking shots against an opponent struggling to find a way to stamp her authority on the match. Just when it seemed Seles was sure to take the set, Pierce elegantly reeled the points back in with barely a murmur beyond an occasional "allez" to herself.

The crowd was more vocal for Seles, whistling and booing when Pierce queried a line call, but it did not matter.

"I don't know what happened," a stunned Seles said afterwards. "I can't explain. I don't think I ever held anybody down 6-3 in both sets and the other person won it. I felt I was going for my shots at 6-3."

Seles, who enjoyed a bye into the second round and a rest day on Wednesday, started the match badly when she lost her serve to Pierce in the opening game. She soon found herself 3-0 and then 5-3 down before holding serve and breaking Pierce to level at 5-5.

Both then held serve to go into the tiebreak with Pierce breaking Seles before the American forged 6-3 clear.

Seles then hit two returns to the net and another wide to allow Pierce right back. The Frenchwoman broke and then clinched the set with a soft rally-killing drop shot.

The two held serve throughout the second set to 5-5, with Seles failing to take two break points at 3-3, and then each broke the other in quick succession to go to 6-6.

Seles again had two set points on her serve at 6-5 but squandered them before double-faulting.

The second tiebreak saw Pierce break Seles before the American took a 6-3 lead. Seles was again let down by her finishing and the Frenchwoman won with a deep forehand.

"I just kept fighting for every point, I didn't worry about winning or losing," said Pierce, who had never before taken a set off Seles.

Pierce now plays Romanian 14th seed Ruxandra Dragomir for a place in the semifinals.

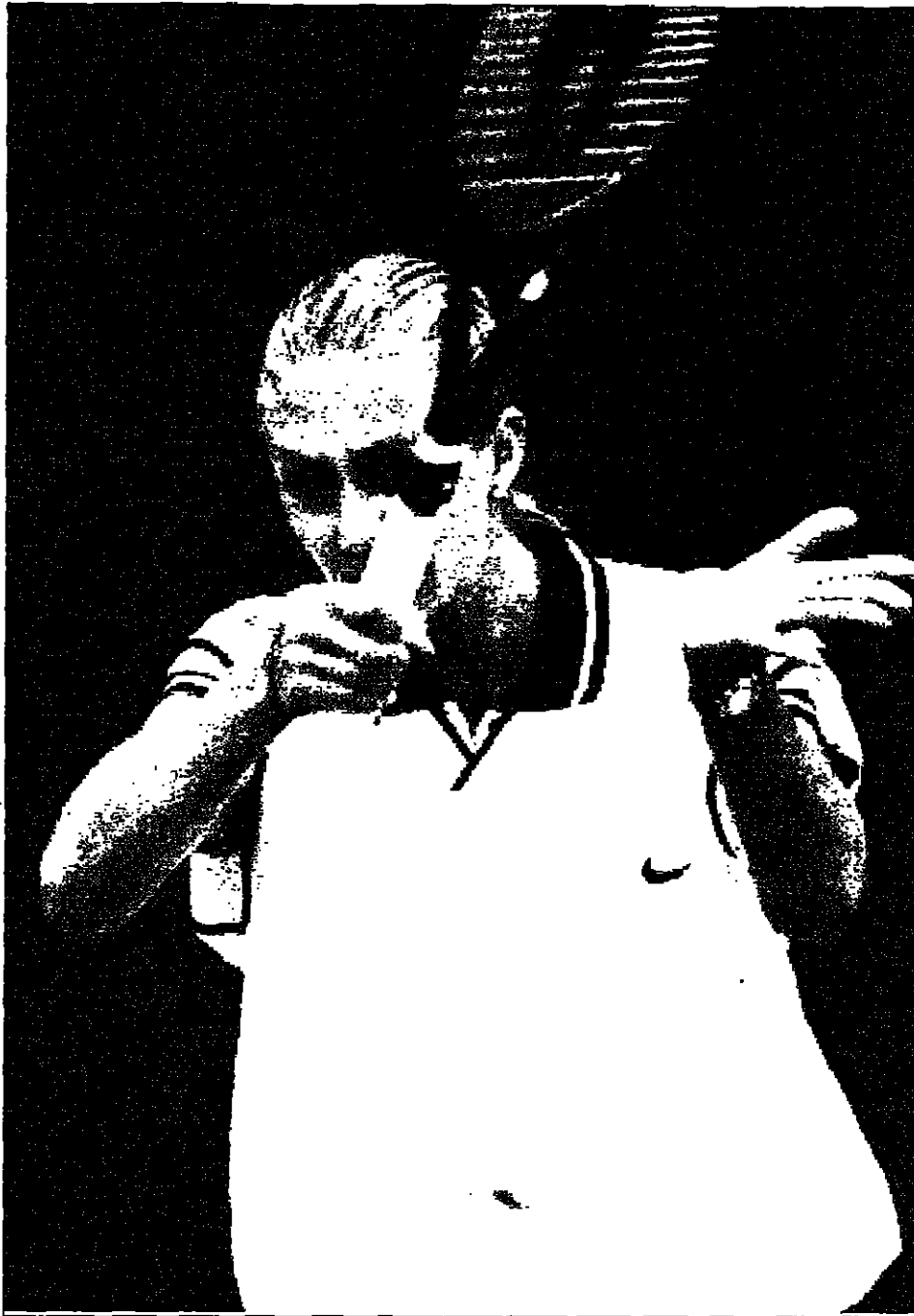
Dragomir beat fifth-seeded Croat Iva Majoli earlier in the evening in another third-round upset.

The departure of Seles left Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Conchita Martinez as the top two seeds left.

Martinez kept on course for her fifth successive Italian title, cruising into the quarter-finals with the rain more of an obstacle than Russian 12th seed Elena Likhovtseva.

The third seed, who has dropped only eight games from two matches so far, won 6-2 6-1.

Rain had delayed the start of the third round by almost



Mary Pierce

five hours and when play eventually started it was suspended again after about an hour as the skies opened once more.

Martinez now meets unseeded South African Joannette Kruger, who knocked out eighth seeded Slovak Karina Habsudova 6-2 6-4 to claim her second name player of the tournament.

The 23-year-old, ranked 121st in the world, beat Dutch ninth seed Brenda Schultz McCarthy 6-2 7-5 in the second round and appeared unconcerned at the prospect of Martinez.

"She has the pressure on her because she has won here so many times. I'm just going to go out there

and play as I have been playing for the past few weeks," she said.

Second seed Sanchez, seeking her first title of the year, beat 13th-seeded Belgian Sabine Appelmans 6-3 6-4. She now plays unseeded Swiss Patty Schnyder, who edged out sixth seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa 7-6, 7-5.

Wihdat win 16th Cup Winners' Cup

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Wihdat Friday won the first of the 1997 soccer titles when they scored a 2-0 victory over Al Ramtha in the season opening match.

The match grouped the Premier League and Jordan Cup champions of the preceding year. Since Al Wihdat won the 1996 Premier League and Jordan Cup titles, their opponents were Jordan Cup runners-up Al Ramtha.

Over 23 thousand fans joined HRH Prince Abdullah at Al Hussein Youth City with L.G. Electronics providing JD 20,000 in sponsorship including J.D. 4000 to Al Wihdat and Al Ramtha and J.D. 2000 to Al Hussein Youth City. L.G. also provided trophies and medals as well as eight major prizes for attending fans.

Al Ramtha's last major title was the 1996 Federation Shield. They came third after Al Wihdat and Al Faisali in the League.

It was Al Wihdat's third Cup Winners' Cup title after winning the trophy in 1989 and 1992. Al Faisali hold the record in the event with 10 wins.

The second of the season's competitions, the Federation Shield, kicked off Thursday grouping the 10 Premier League teams.

Playing on a knockout basis, the teams are divided into two groups.

Group 1: Qadissieh, Baqaa, Faisali, Ahli, and Ramtha.
Group 2: Hussein, Wihdat, Shabab Al Hussein, Jazireh, Karmel.

Al Baqaa won the opening match eliminating Al Qadissieh 1-0 Thursday.

The Premier League is scheduled for June with ten teams taking part. The last two teams will be relegated to the First Division.

The Jordan Cup is scheduled for mid-August and will group 41 teams representing the Premier League as well as the First and Second Divisions.

The competition will be held on a knockout basis

Cup Winners' Cup record

1981 — Faisali
1982 — Faisali
1983 — Ramtha
1984 — Faisali
1985 — Jazireh
1986 — Faisali
1987 — Faisali
1989 — Wihdat
1990 — Ramtha
1991 — Faisali
1992 — Wihdat
1993 — Faisali
1994 — Faisali
1995 — Faisali
1996 — Faisali
1997 — Wihdat

with most of the Premier League teams playing in the second round.

Other competitions have already begun including the first indoor competition grouping Premier League teams.

The first Division groups 14 teams with the top two moving to the Premier League and the last two relegated to the second division.

Blackburn safe, Middlesbrough in trouble in Premier League

LONDON (R) — Blackburn Rovers secured their place in next season's English Premier League Thursday with a goalless home draw against Middlesbrough.

One point was enough for Blackburn, champions two seasons ago, but struggling Middlesbrough really needed a win.

At the top of the table Manchester United, already confirmed as champions, drew 0-0 at home with Newcastle to dent the visitors' hopes of finishing as runners-up and claiming the second Champions' League spot.

With one game to go, United have 72 points with Liverpool second on 67. Newcastle and Arsenal both have 65 with Newcastle in third place on goals scored.

Middlesbrough, who face Chelsea in the F.A. Cup final on May 17, may now be relegated even if they win their last game at Leeds on Sunday.

Thursday's result also meant that West Ham and

Everton cannot now go down.

With Nottingham Forest already doomed, the final two relegation places will be filled by either Middlesbrough, Coventry, Sunderland or Southampton.

Coventry and Middlesbrough have 38 points, Sunderland have 40 and Southampton 41. Saints, however, have a far superior goal difference and should be safe.

Thursday's relegation battle was the fixture that should have been played last December before Middlesbrough unilaterally called it off at 24 hours notice because of a shortage of personnel.

They were subsequently docked three points and that looks like making all the difference to their roller coaster season.

Newcastle, who beat United 5-0 at home in October, also needed three points to put them in the driving seat in the chase for second place.

But again a draw was a fair result in a game where both teams looked tired. Paul Scholes and Andy Cole both scraped the bar for United while Les Ferdinand scrambled a loose ball against a post in a rare Newcastle attack.

Liverpool will clinch second place if they win at Sheffield Wednesday on Sunday.

Becker, Muster, Krajicek out of German Open

HAMBURG (R) — Boris Becker's comeback shattered to a halt amid the wind and rain at the German Open on Thursday, beaten 7-6, 6-2 by Spain's Felix Mantilla, while the top-seeded Thomas Muster was blown away 6-1, 6-2 by a storm of brilliance from a 23-year-old Moroccan Hicham Arazi.

Six seeds failed to reach their places in the quarter-finals in a tournament which has provided ingloriously rapid dismissals for some other famous names.

Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek, seeded three, lost 6-1, 6-1 to Andrei Medvedev and Wayne Ferreira, the sixth seed, went down 6-1 6-3 to Sergei Bruguera of Spain.

At least Becker had his moments. The three-times Wimbledon champion held a point to win the first set before going out 7-6 (8-6), 6-2 to the patiently rallying Mantilla, one of three Spaniards to make the quarter-finals.

The German might have done still better had not rain delayed the match for almost an hour with the score at 6-6 in the tie-break. At that stage Becker was creating some attacking momentum in slippery, gusty conditions which hindered a serve-volleyer most of all.

On the resumption, Becker twice approached the net a little ambitiously and saw two fluent backhands from Mantilla go past him.

First set captured, the Spaniard gained in confi-



Thomas Muster

dence, and Mantilla's superior ground strokes increasingly assumed control of the contest. Becker, who the day before had achieved his first win for 11 weeks in only his second tournament since aggravating a wrist injury, was left to contemplate what

might have been. "The match was a bit different after the break," he said.

Mantilla next plays Arazi, who can rarely have played better than while ousting clay

court king Muster on his favourite surface.

Arazi covered the court with great speed and intelligently mixed teasing backhand slices with bouts of

brilliant hitting.

Krajicek departed with hardly a whimper. The world number five seemed quite unable to adapt to the conditions and delayed the progress of Medvedev, who had won both their previous contests on slow surfaces, little more than 50 minutes.

The eighth-ranked Chilean Marcelo Rios, trying to make his way back after a thigh injury, also looked well below par as he went out 6-4, 6-1 to Spain's Alberto Berasategui.

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QATARI POETS VISIT IRAQ AND MEET UDAY: Uday, son of President Saddam Hussein, receives a group of Qatari poets who attended the first pan-Arab bedouin poetry festival held in Baghdad on Thursday (AFP photo)

Egypt assails Israeli allegations that they built historic pyramids

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt is waging war to protect the pyramids and the sphinx from an "organised campaign" by Israel and foreign antiquarian archaeologists, officials here say.

"Israeli allegations that they built the pyramids and we must face up to this even if it triggers a diplomatic crisis" with Israel, Egyptian Culture Minister Farouk Hosni told the weekly Rose Al Youssef.

"This is piracy. Our history and our civilisation must be respected but the Israelis want to take over everything," he said.

"We must not ignore these allegations and keep silent. We must counterattack with full strength because this is how they took Palestine. They kept on saying Palestine belongs to them and they are doing the same with the pyramids."

"Sooner or later someone is bound to believe them," Mr. Hosni said this week.

The custodian of the pyramids and the sphinx, Zahi Hawass, told a news conference on Wednesday that these allegations are part of an "organised campaign" against the symbol of Egyptian civilisation.

"A group of people are making an organised campaign. There are some people pushing them," Mr. Hawass said, referring to Israel.

"They pretend that I have

found evidence concerning Atlantis and that I am hiding this evidence from them," the director of the Giza pyramids told the Foreign Press Association in Cairo.

Some theories suggest that the Giza and pre-Colombian American pyramids were built by residents of the lost continent of Atlantis, which according to legend existed from 10,000 to 12,000 BC between Europe and America.

"There are people waging a big attack against us," Mr. Hawass said.

"I swore two years ago I would not reveal their names, but I found out that I must mention them because it is becoming a threat," he said.

Mr. Hawass identified them as Robert Bauval, an architect from Belgium; Graham Hancock, a British journalist; John Anthony West, a U.S. tourist guide; and Richard Hoagland "who speaks of the existence of pyramids on Mars."

"What they spread on the Internet has begun to convince those who do not know the truth," Mr. Hawass said.

Mr. Bauval has written two books, one of them in cooperation with Mr. Hancock, outlining theories that the ancient Egyptians were not responsible for building the pyramids.

"They needed a victim to sell their books and they

found their victim: it was me," he said.

"They pretended that I was carrying out secret work around the pyramids and that I had found evidence linking them to Atlantis which I was hiding," Mr. Hawass said.

"What they got to say will make you laugh. I even did but then I had to stop because things were becoming dangerous," Mr. Hawass said.

According to Mr. Hawass, his detractors convinced people across the world to sign petitions urging the Egyptian authorities to allow them to carry out excavation work at the Giza plateau.

"John West arranged to get an authorisation to dig around the sphinx about five years ago. But one day I found him knocking on the sphinx. That's when I stopped him and told him to leave," Mr. Hawass said.

The Egyptian official, who described Mr. West and the others as amateurs, stressed that under Egyptian law only professionals are authorised to take part in archaeological missions.

Meanwhile, the head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, Ali Hassan, recently said that the council will soon open a site on the Internet to set the record straight.

Agreement initialled to establish a Jordanian press institute

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Press Association (JPA), International Organisation of Journalists (IOJ) along with the Berlin Press Institute initialled on Friday an understanding agreement to establish a press institute in Amman to train journalists.

JPA's President Seif Sharif said: "Establishing such an institute in Amman is in appreciation of the Kingdom's leadership and great role of the Jordanian press."

Mr. Sharif said that this movement was in line with JPA's calls for Jordan to be a "beacon of press in the Middle East region."

He added that his Majesty King Hussein had donated a piece of land in the King Hussein Medical Centre area in order for the JPA to establish its headquarters, club and institute for training journalists.

IOJ's President, Suleiman Qudat, said: "This agreement between the JPA, IOJ and the Berlin press institute stipulates for establishing a press institute in Amman, the first of its kind in the Arab World, and draw up a working plan that has to be ready next month."

He added that the institute, in addition to training journalists, will promote dialogue and research. The agreement was signed on behalf of the JPA, the IOJ and the Berlin press institute by Seif Sharif, Amman, and by Klaus respectively.

Americans claim they detected chemicals in Gulf war mine fields

CHARLESTON (AP) — Marine Master Sergeant Michael Bradford recounted how his unit plowed through an Iraqi mine field and past burning oil wells into Kuwait during the Gulf war.

Then, as they raced headlong through a black rain, Sgt. Bradford quickly sounded the alarm to the column — gas!

His six-wheeled vehicle, which was equipped with computers to monitor chemicals on the battlefield, had detected mustard and nerve gas, he and other witnesses told a presidential commission Wednesday looking into Gulf war illnesses.

But others from the military questioned the account. They said the reading may have been false and no chemical mines were ever found among the hundreds of thousands the Iraqis left buried in the sand.

"There were chemicals in that breach," Sgt. Bradford firmly told the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses. He believes there were two chemical mines in the field.

In January, the committee that is investigating illnesses suffered by thousands of Gulf war veterans said the Pentagon was stop dragging its feet investigating incidents and err in favour of telling

troops involved about risks to their health.

"It's very clear we're going to have to be following up on a lot of issues," Dr. Joyce Lashof, the panel chairwoman, added Wednesday. "We're not putting this to bed today."

Veterans have reported such symptoms as memory loss, fatigue, diarrhoea and insomnia. Some blame chemical weapons, but the panel's January report said there was no single cause.

"I really wish it was in my head," said Kenneth Queen of Spindale, North Carolina. "I would like to go one day in my life without hurting."

The committee is holding hearings around the country where there are concentrations of veterans.

At Wednesday's hearing, Sgt. Bradford and three former and current marines said Sgt. Bradford's vehicle and another detected chemicals during the push toward Kuwait City. All said they suffered some symptoms of Gulf illness.

But Lieutenant Colonel Art Nalls, chief of the marine's Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents Division, said there was "no substantive evidence to confirm or deny chemical presence" during the push to Kuwait City.

What evidence there is anecdotal and computer tapes inconclusive, Col. Nalls said.

Turkish Islamists protest plans to close down religious schools

Resigned minister works hard to free coalition government from Islamists

ANKARA (Agencies) — Some 400 people took to the streets in Bingol, a southeastern city Friday to protest military-imposed plans to curb religious schools, police said.

A police officer was slightly injured by a stone thrown by the demonstrators, and 24 protesters were detained, Yavuz Tokur, the police chief of Bingol, told the Associated Press.

The Anatolia news agency said a protester was also injured. Mr. Tokur would not confirm it.

"Don't touch our religious schools," chanted the demonstrators, as they were leaving mosques after traditional noon prayers.

Meanwhile, a prosecutor launched an investigation about a lawmaker, Ibrahim Halil Celik, from the Islamic

Welfare Party (IWP) after he was quoted Friday as saying "blood will spill" if the religious schools are scaled back.

"The country will turn into a bloodbath, worse than Algeria," Mr. Celik was quoted by the Sabah newspaper but later denied making the comments.

A military-led advisory council has urged Islamist-led government to extend mandatory schooling from five to eight consecutive years in an attempt to stamp out the growing practice of sending children to mosque-based schools once they hit sixth grade. Some critics believe these are used to push fundamentalist ideology.

On Friday, a former Turkish cabinet minister stepped up his campaign to

forge an "Islamist-free" government to replace Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's divided coalition.

Yalim Erez, a secularist who resigned his post last month as trade and industry minister in protest at rising Islamist fervour, was to hold talks with the head of the left-wing Republican People's Party, party officials said.

The consultations, scheduled for 5 p.m., are the latest in a series of attempts by Mr. Erez, a pillar of the mainstream business community, to oust Mr. Erbakan and his Welfare Party.

Mr. Erez has been trying to drum up support for a secularist pact since he resigned over the government's reluctance to comply with army demands for a crackdown on

Islamist activism.

However, he must overcome years of mistrust among the mainstream secularist parties, whose squabbling allowed Mr. Erbakan to become modern Turkey's first Islamist leader with just 21 per cent of the popular vote.

Parliament sources said Mr. Erez, of the conservative True Path Party, was expected to meet other leaders early next week and would then hold talks with True Path leader Tansu Ciller, junior partner in the Erbakan government.

On Thursday, Mr. Erez emerged from a session with main opposition leader Mesut Yilmaz, of the Motherland Party, confident that he could forge a deal.

Iraq's Tareq Aziz meets Primakov

MOSCOW (AFP) — Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz met Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov in Moscow Friday and called for the lifting of U.N. sanctions against Baghdad, Interfax news agency reported.

Mr. Aziz stopped off in Moscow on his way back from a visit to China, where he also called for the embargo on Iraqi oil sales to be lifted. The U.N. Security Council decided last week to renew the sanctions, initially imposed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, for two months.

Russian officials "noted with satisfaction Iraq's willingness to cooperate in a constructive way with the U.N. and to speed up clarification of questions that remain in suspense, which will open the way to a lifting of the oil embargo on Iraq," Interfax quoted foreign ministry sources as saying.

The Security Council decision to renew the sanctions came after Rolf Ekeus, head of the U.N.'s Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament, expressed concern over Baghdad's potential ability to launch a biological weapons attack on neighbouring capitals.

Mr. Ekeus said Iraq could be hiding tonnes of deadly VX nerve gas.

Elimination of all Iraqi chemical and biological weaponry and missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres is a condition for lifting of the embargo.

The two officials also discussed implementation of the newly agreed "oil-for-food" programme, under which Iraq can sell \$2 billion worth of crude oil every six months in order to buy essential food and medicines.

Iraq began exporting crude Dec. 10 and receiving food supplies on March 20. It has so far received no medicines.

Russia has said repeatedly that it would like to boost economic cooperation with its old ally, and in March it signed a major deal to develop an Iraqi oil field. The deal will only come into effect once the sanctions are lifted.

"We share the view that we must move towards a lifting of the sanctions. Naturally, on the express condition that Baghdad voluntarily fulfil all the conditions of the U.N. Security Council's resolutions," Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvalyuk told Interfax.

Lebanese jailed warlord gets third life sentence

BEIRUT (AFP) — Former Christian warlord Samir Ja'ja on Friday was given the death penalty for a 1991 attempt to assassinate a government minister, but the sentence was immediately commuted to life in prison.

The verdict came as the Papal Nuncio in Lebanon, Pablo Puente, promised to do "everything possible" to secure the freedom of prisoners to mark Pope John Paul II's visit to Lebanon this weekend.

Ja'ja, who is already serving two life sentences for murder, was found guilty of the failed attempt against the previous Defence Minister Michel Murr — now deputy prime minister and interior minister.

The judicial council, Lebanon's highest court for state security crimes and whose verdicts cannot be appealed, delivered its ruling after a six-month trial.

Ja'ja was not present during the session, in a common practice meant to avoid emotional reactions in the court which was closely guarded by Lebanese army soldiers and security officers.

Four of Ja'ja's followers, who are still at large, received the same penalty and another three were sentenced in absentia to life, reduced to 20 years.

Another four, only one of whom is in custody, were found not guilty of the assassination attempt.

The judicial council said the sentences were commuted because the bomb attack on Mr. Murr occurred before the 1991 general amnesty law for crimes committed during the 1975-1990 civil war.

Ja'ja, 45, commander of the disbanded Christian Lebanese Forces, is the only militia leader from the war to have been put on trial.

Most Christian leaders consider the trial of Ja'ja to be politically motivated and a deliberate attempt to marginalise their community, which emerged weakened from the country's 15-year civil war.

Ja'ja has twice rejected cabinet seats in the pro-Syrian governments formed after the end of the civil strife.

His wife, Sitrida, who was attending Friday's court session has told AFP that he "entered prison because of a political decision and will be released by a political decision."

The Pope is due to arrive in Beirut on Saturday for a two-day visit to Lebanon, home of the most important Christian community in the Middle East.

Ja'ja's lawyers have also sent an open letter to the Pope to alert him about Ja'ja's poor prison conditions, without explicitly asking the pontiff to intervene.

However, Ja'ja cannot yet benefit from a pardon because he is still facing a trial for the 1987 assassination of former Prime Minister Rashid Karamneh.

Ja'ja is being held in solitary confinement in an underground prison at the defence ministry in east Beirut. He is serving two life sentences for the 1989 killing of a Christian doctor, Elie Zayek, and the 1990 assassination of rival Christian leader Dany Chamoun and his family.

The judicial council last year ruled that Ja'ja was innocent of a 1994 church bombing near Beirut that killed 11 worshippers and led to the dissolution of the Lebanese forces and Ja'ja's arrest.

The bombing also led to the postponement of a Papal visit which was set for 1994.

Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, a Sunni Muslim, Monday rejected criticism of Ja'ja's arrest, which has been pointed to as proof of a double standard used against Christians.

He held that judicial authorities were implementing the amnesty law for war crimes and that no proposal has been so far submitted to amend it.

The law allows the sentencing, in the case of a second offence, for crimes committed during the civil war.

Pope to arrive in Lebanon today amidst tough security

BEIRUT (AFP) — Pope John Paul II arrives in Lebanon on Saturday for the first papal visit to the region in more than three decades, against a backdrop of heightened debate over Syria's influence in its tiny neighbour.

Security is tight for the two-day trip, which many hope will provide a chance to heal civil war wounds but some fear could reopen rifts between the Muslim and Christian communities that dominate Lebanon's religious mosaic.

"The Pope's visit will strengthen fanaticism on the two sides," Lebanon's minister for the displaced, Walid Jumblatt, a Druze leader, warned in an interview with the pro-Syrian Al Safir newspaper on Friday.

A papal visit was initially planned for 1994, four years after the end of the 15-year civil war, but was cancelled after a church bombing north of Beirut which left 11 worshippers dead.

The Lebanese army has put 20,000 soldiers on alert

and police, security forces, navy vessels and military helicopters are being deployed in Beirut, once the green line separating the warring Christian and Muslim militias.

The Syrian army, which keeps 35,000 troops in Lebanon, has set up positions around Beirut International Airport, which will be closed for two hours for the Pope's arrival around midday Saturday and his departure Sunday evening.

During his visit, the 76-year-old Pope is due to sign the apostolic exhortation inspired by resolutions taken during the synod held for Lebanon in Rome in 1995.

The synod called for Israel's withdrawal from occupied parts of southern Lebanon and for the departure of the Syrian troops, a call that triggered sharp criticism from several Muslim leaders who have nevertheless welcomed his visit.

But some Christians suggest the 77th international

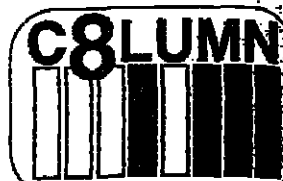
pastoral trip by the man known here as "Al Baba" might "consecrate" Syria's influence in Lebanon, home to the most important Christian community in the Middle East.

Last month, the Greek Orthodox bishop of the eastern Baalbek region said the Vatican had informed the Syrians that the visit "was not aimed against them and that the Pope was with them and not with Israel against them."

The Christian community of 1.5 million, out of an estimated population of four million, held the lion's share of power in Lebanon until the end of the civil war in 1990.

The country was for many years a model of Christian-Muslim peaceful co-existence — until it imploded in factional fighting.

Excitement over the visit has been growing daily and decorations, Vatican flags and victory arches have appeared on the streets of Beirut and other areas on the Pope's itinerary.



Boy saved from dog's life in the Philippines

LUCENA (AFP) — A 14-year-old boy signed an agreement to be chained like a canine as punishment for killing a local businessman's guard dog, the government's Commission on Human Rights said Friday. As punishment for killing local coconut trader Fernando Salazar's guard dog in Lucena, southeast of Manila, Roel Adriano signed an agreement drawn up with the aid of a district official that he would be chained up in the businessman's front yard for a month to replace the slain animal. "Chaining the boy would constitute a blatant violation of human rights," Human Rights Commissioner Rolando Ingles said, adding that Salazar and the town captain agreed not to implement the punishment.

Hedgehog barbecue enrages British animal activists

LONDON (R) — British hedgehog-welfare activists vowed to scupper plans by a self-styled "king of the gypsies" to hold a traditional gypsy barbecue where the small woodland animals would be grilled on skewers and marinated in honey. Former bare-knuckle fighter Bartley Gorman is selling tickets for a gypsy festival on his land in Uttroter, central England, in July. Attractions include gypsy music around traditional campfires, and barbecued hedgehog. "We are going to get this stopped," said Anne Jenkins of Britain's Hedgehog Preservation Society. Jenkins said the society's members would prefer to have the festival stopped by using British laws against the breeding or trapping of hedgehogs. "But if we have to call our people out to picket it, we will," she added.

Student abused job sex-discrimination law

FRANKFURT (AFP) — A male student who systematically applied for jobs advertised for women has failed in his efforts to sue the firms for sexual discrimination, it was reported Friday. The business management student selected jobs for women in the newspaper "situations vacant" columns, such as fashion assistant, receptionist or telephonist. When his job applications were rejected, he then set about suing the firms for allegedly discriminating against him on the basis of his maleness. However, as Cologne industrial tribunal rejected his complaint as abusive, ruling that he only applied for the jobs in order to seek compensation, the Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung reported.

Ringo's boy joins The Who in Paris concert

PARIS (AFP) — Three decades after they burst onto the British rock scene, The Who take to the stage in Paris next Tuesday and Wednesday — with the son of Beatles drummer Ringo Starr sitting in for the late Keith Moon. Zal Starkey will be behind the drum kit when guitarist and song-writer Pete Townshend, 51, bassist John Entwistle, 53, and singer frontman Roger Daltrey, 53, perform the band's 1979 ode to the mods, "Quadrophonia," organisers said. The Who last performed at London's Hyde Park in June 1996 for a charity run by Prince Charles, and that was for the first time since a tourous U.S. tour in 1989. Moon died nine years later.